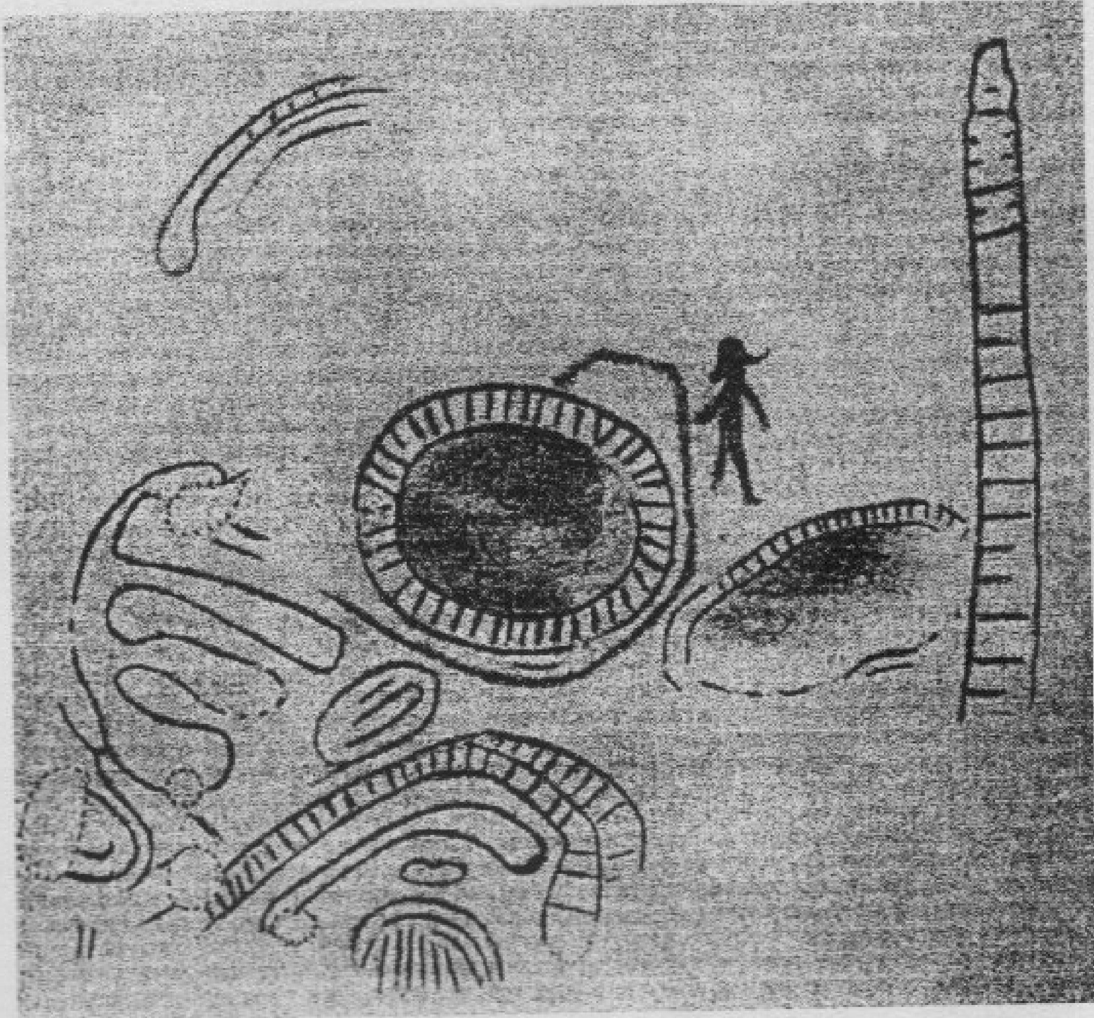
THE RELIGIONS OF THE PRE-CONTACT VICTORIAN ABORIGINES

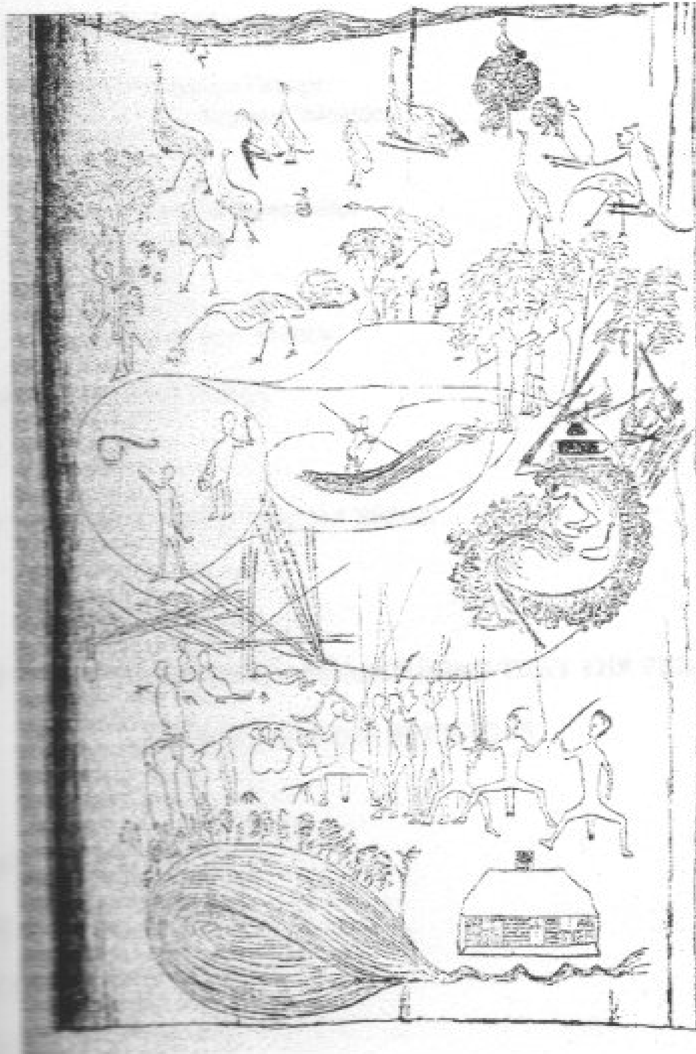


BY
COLIN LESLIE DEAN

THE RELIGIONS OF THE PRE-CONTACT VICTORIAN ABORIGINES

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Line drawing of bark painting from near Lake Tyrrell made in about 1880 in R. B. Smyth The Aborigines of Victoria (Pub. John Ferres, London, 1878, Vol. 1, P. 286)

GAMAHUCHER PRESS, GEELONG WEST, GEELONG, VICTORIA, AUSTRALIA, 1998

Front cover picture " Cave of the Serpent," Mt Langi Ghiran near Arrarat in the country of the Djab wurrung (A Massola " A Reinterpretation of the Cave of the Serpent" Victorian Naturalist Vol 74, 1957)



INDEX

ILLUSTRATIONS

PREFACE

This study doesn't look at the forms of initiation, marriage, burial customs, magic practices etc but only looks at the ideas or beliefs of the pre-contact Victorian Aborigines. It only looks at the beliefs regarding Gods, totemism and Dreamtime ideas. This study does not look at such things as burial beliefs, ideas about the stars, or magic. This study is not so much an original contribution to the theory regarding the religions of the pre-contact Victorian Aborigines as it is a synthesis or compilation of the primarily journal material published in the 1800's. This synthesis involves arranging the material around contemporary categories of investigation. The definitive work on the Victorian Aborigines is Howitt's The Native Tribes Of South-East Australia.[1] My study doesn't add greatly to Howitt's data but does bring some of it together in a more ordered form; with some new data supplied from some 1800's journals.

The contributions to the literature this study seeks to add to are perhaps three in number. 1) The delineation and characterisation of the five or six religious systems of the pre-contact Victorian Aborigines. 2) The characterisation of these systems as Religious/ Mystical consciousness. This characterisation is one of pure speculation and is an inference drawn from the phenomenology of mystical experiences. 3) The placement of pre-contact Victorian totemism within the system as outlined by Elkin.

Though the study doesn't enter into discussions regarding initiation behaviour is an important religious manifestation thus it should be pointed out that there are five forms

[1] A.W. Howitt's The Native Tribes Of South-East Australia.,Aboriginal Studies Press, 1996.

of initiation through out pre-contact Victoria The Kurnia[2] had the Jeraeil where for the rite of passage the initiates are put to sleep as boys and are awkened as men. The Kulin nation[3] had had the Jibauk where the rite of passage for the initiates was the cutting of the boy hair like a cock's comb, plastering pipe-clay over their head and shoulders and white pipe clay painted in a band from ear to ear. The initiates then had to beg for their food in the tribe and upon their hair growing long the Jibauk's where then introduced to the tribe as men. The south Western tribes rite of passage was the pulling out of all the body hair. The Wergai's rite of passage was roasting the initiates over a fire. The rite of passage for the tribes along the Murray from Mildura to Echuca was tooth extraction as it was for the Yaimathung tribe

In the old literature there are a variety of names used to refer to the same tribe. Consequently to achieve uniformity of nomenclature the source for the names of the tribes of pre-contact Victoria is from two works Ian Clark's, Aboriginal Languages and Clans, Department of Geography and Environmental Science Monash University Victoria Australia, 1996. and D.B.Tindale Distribution of Australian Aboriginal Tribes: a field survey. Royal Society of South Australian Transactions , vol.64, pp.140-231. For more detail regarding individual tribes within the major tribal complexes one should consult Clark's work.

[2] The Kurnia compride the folowing clans Braikauiung, Bratauoiung,Tatungaiung, Nrabralung, Krauetungaiung

[3] The Kulin nation was made up of the following tribes Woi Wurrung, Bun Wurrung,Wada Wurrung, Djadja Wurrung, Daung Wurrung, Nguraiillam Wurrung

TABLE OF THE TRIBES OF PRE-CONTACT VICTORIAN ABORIGINES

TABLE 1

1 BIDEWEL
2 KRAUETUNGAIUNG
3 BRABRALUNG
4 TATUNGAIUNG
5 BRATAUOIUNG
6 BRAIKAUIUNG
7 WOI WURRUNG
8 BUN WURRUNG
9 DAUNG WURRUNG
10 YAITMATHANG
11 DJILAMATANG
12 WAVEROO
13 NGURAILLAM WURRUNG
14 YODAYODA
15 BARABABARABA
16 DJADJA WURRUNG
17 WADA WURRUNG
18 DJANGURD WURRUNG
19 GUILDJAN
20 GADUBANUD
21 GIRAI WURRUNG
22 DJAB WURRUNG
23 DHAUWURD WURRUNG
24 JARDWADJALI
25 WERGAIA
26 WEMBAWEMBA
27 WADIWADI
28 DADIDADI
29 JARIJARI
30 LATILATI
31 NGINTAIL
32 MARAURA
33 BAKENDJI
34 KUREINJI
35 BARINDJI
36 MUTIMUTI
37 JITAJITA
38 WIRADJURI
39 WOIGAL
40 NGATICO
41WAIBANGA
42 WANDANDIAN
43 TAUA
44 WONGAIBON
45 NGARKAT
46 MARDITJAIL
47 BUNGANDITA

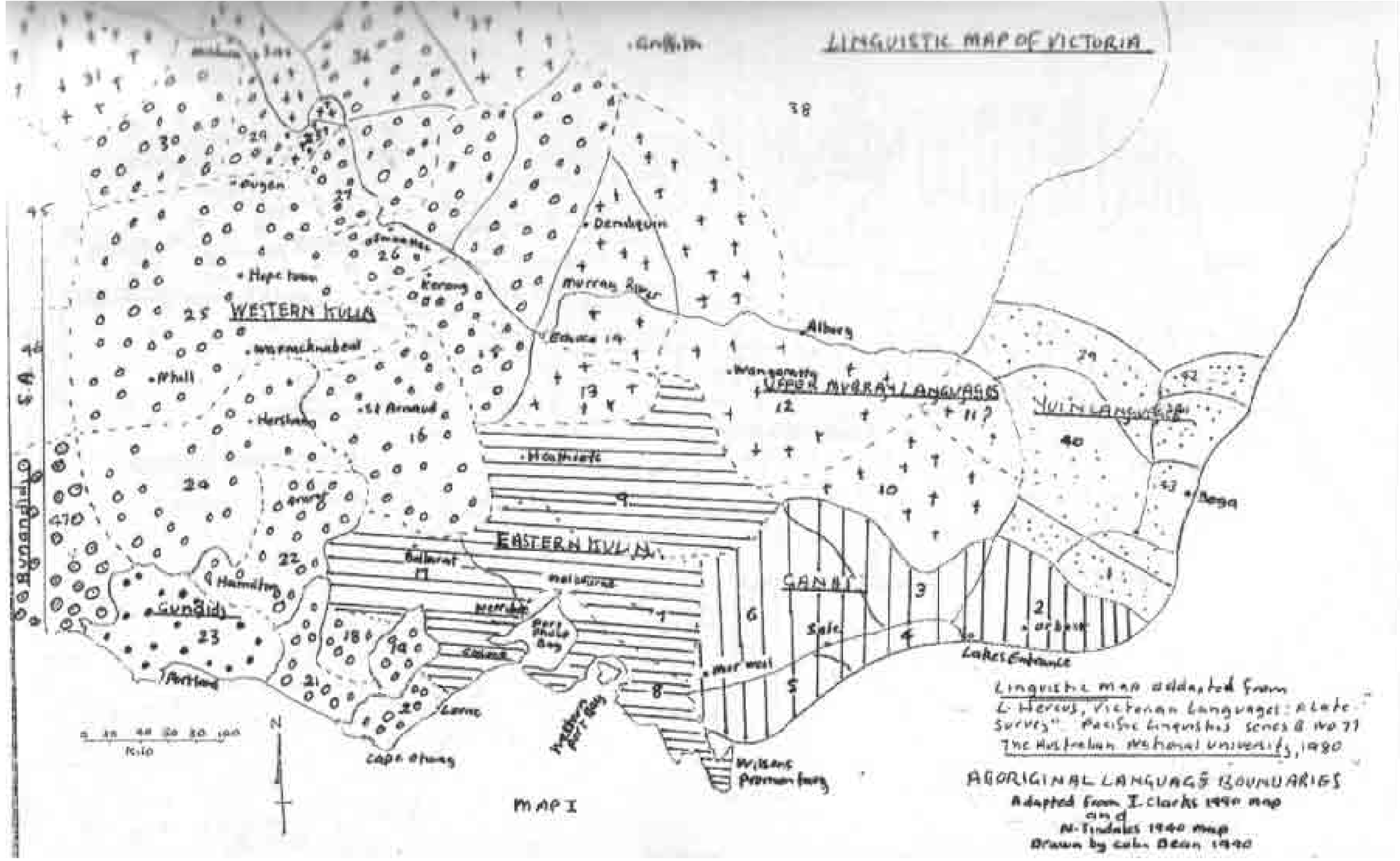
GODS AND DEMAS OF THE PRE-CONTACT VICTORIAN ABORIGINES

TABLE 2

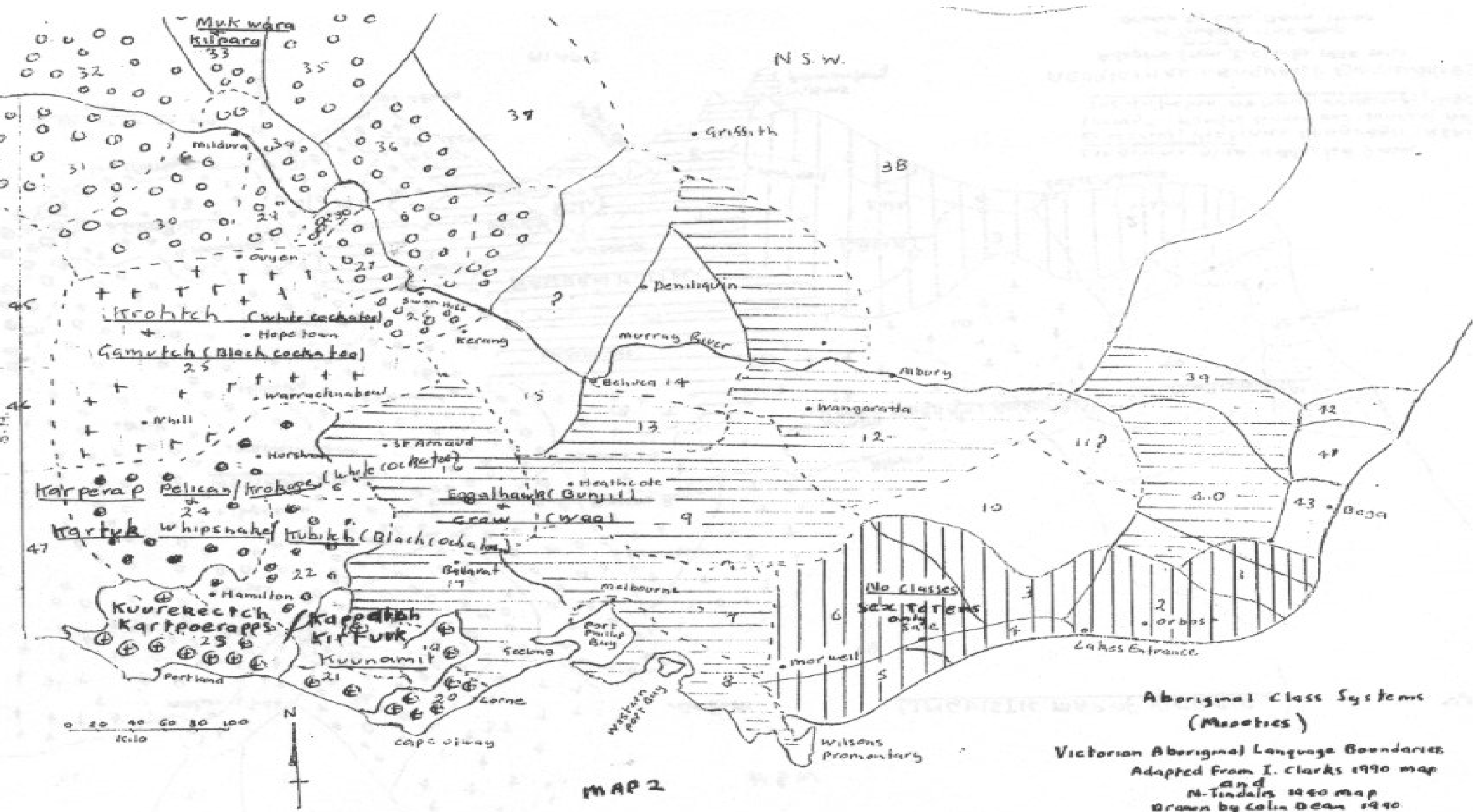
1 BIDEWEL
2 KRAUETUNGAIUNG *Mungan-ngaur*[2]
3 BRABRALUNG
4 TATUNGAIUNG
5 BRATAUOIUNG
6 BRAIKAUIUNG
7 WOI WURRUNG *Bunjil*[5]
8 BUN WURRUNG *Punjil*[6]
9 DAUNG WURRUNG
10 YAITMATHANG *Tharamulun*[7]
11 DJILAMATANG
12 WAVEROO
13 NGURAILLAM WURRUNG *Punjil/Bunjil*
14 YODAYODA
15 BARABABARABA
16 DJADJA WURRUNG *Pundyill/Boondyil/ Binbeal?*[8]
17 WADA WURRUNG *Kari-gnal-a-bil, Detable Moroponuk*[9]*?*
18 DJANGURD WURRUNG
19 GUILDJAN
20 GADUBANUD
21 GIRAI WURRUNG
22 DJAB WURRUNG Chaap wuurong *Mam yungrakk*[10]
23 DHAUWURD WURRUNG Kuurn kopan tribe -*Pirnmeheeal/ Peep ghatnaen,* Peek whuurong tribe - *Peep ghnatnaen*[11]
24 JARDWADJALI
25 WERGAIA *Pupperimbul, bunjill/Man-Ngorak*[12]
26 WEMBAWEMBA *Gnawaderoot*[1]
27 WADIWADI *Th-tha-puli*[3]
28 DADIDADI *Tulong*[4]
29 JARIJARI
30 LATILATI
31 NGINTAIL
32 MARAURA
33 BAKENDJI
34 KUREINJI
35 BARINDJI
36 MUTIMUTI
37 JITAJITA
38 WIRADJURI
39 WOIGAL
40 NGATICO
41WAIBANGA
42 WANDANDIAN
43 TAUA
44 WONGAIBON
45 NGARKAT
46 MARDITJAIL
47 BUNGANDITA

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[1] See page 82
[2] See page 84
[3] See page 82
[4] See page 82
[5] See page 75
[6] See page 73
[7] See page 84
[8] See page 76
[9] The tribe from which Cary elicited this information was from the Geelong tribe (Barrabbool hills) the Wada Wurrung balug. see page 77
[10] See page 80
[11] See page 80
[12] See page 81



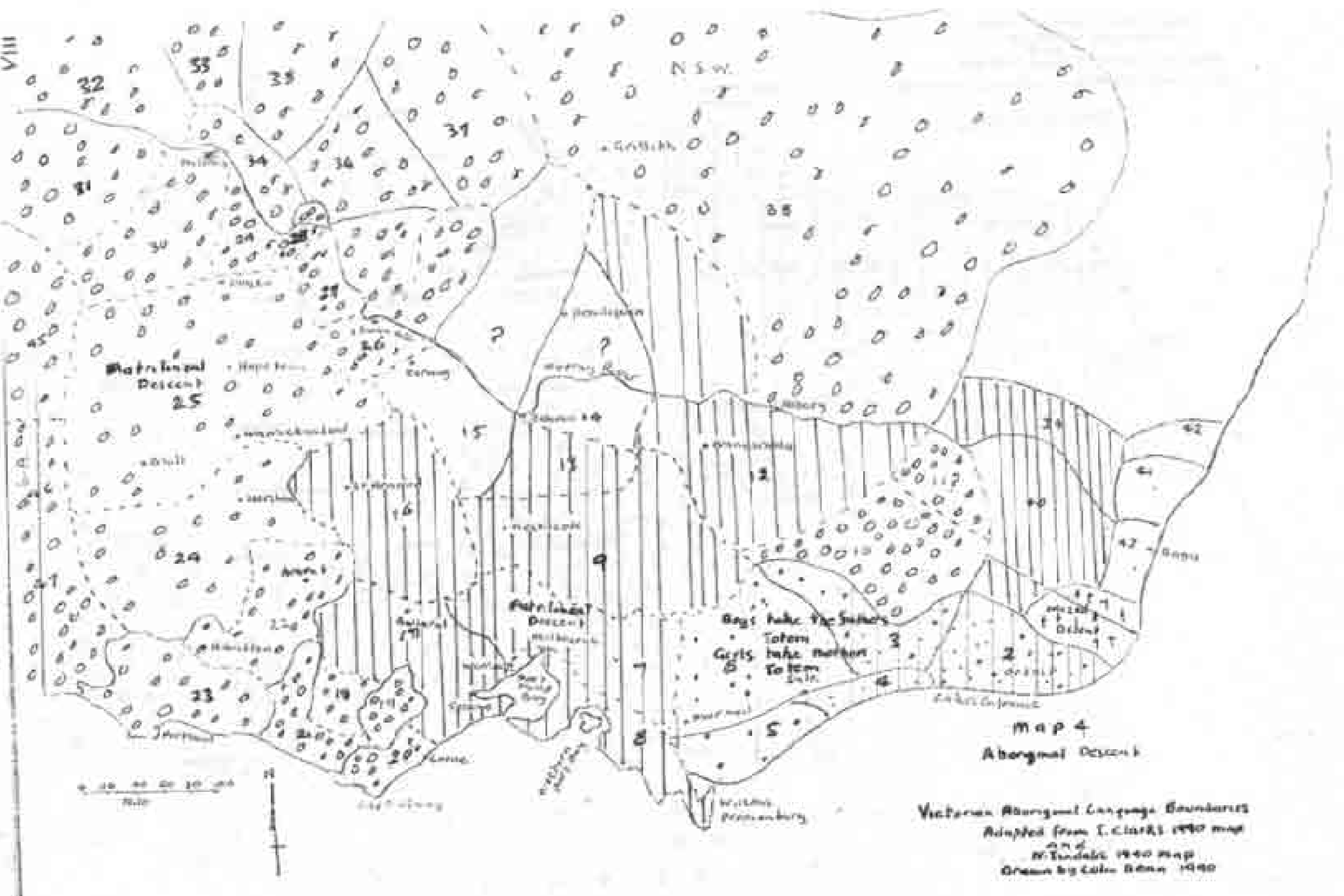
LINGUISTIC MAP OF VICTORIA
Griffith
Deniliquin
Murray River
Albury
Echuca
Wangaratta
UPPER MURRAY LANGUAGES
YUIN LANGUAGES
Bega
Heathcote
WESTERN KULIN
EASTERN KULIN
Hopetoun
Warracknabeal
Horsham
St Arnaud
Kerang
Ballarat
Melbourne
Hamilton
Gundidj
Portland
Cape Otway
Lorne
Port Phillip Bay
Western Port Bay
Wilsons Promontory
Sale
Lakes Entrance
GANAI
Morwell
S.A.
MAP I
Linguistic map addapted from
L. Hercus, "Victorian Languages: A Late Survey", Pacific Linguistics Series B No 77
The Australian National University, 1980
ABORIGINAL LANGUAGE BOUNDARIES
Adapted from I. Clarks 1990 map
and
N. Tindales 1940 map
Drawn by Colin Bean 1990


Mukwara
Kilpara
N.S.W.
Griffith
Mildura
Ouyen
Swan Hill
Kerang
Deniliquin
Murray River
Albury
Wangaratta
Echuca
Krokitch (White cockatoo)
Hopetown
Gamutch (Black cockatoo)
Warracknabeal
Nhill
Horsham
St Arnaud
Heathcote
Karperap
Pelican/Krokage (White cockatoo)
Eaglehawk (Bunjil)
Crow (Waa)
Kartyuk
Whipsnake
Kubitch (Black cockatoo)
Ballarat
Hamilton
Melbourne
Port Phillip Bay
Geelong
Morwell
No classes
Sex totems only
Sale
Orbost
Lakes Entrance
Bega
Kuurekeetch
Karteoerapps
Kappatah
Kirtuk
Kuunamit
Portland
Lorne
Cape Otway
Wilsons Promontary
Westernport Bay
Kilo
MAP 2
Aboriginal Class Systems
(Moieties)
Victorian Aboriginal Language Boundaries
Adapted from I. Clarks 1990 map
and
N. Tindale's 1940 map
Drawn by Colin Dean 1990

Map 3

Forms of Initiation

Victorian Aboriginal Language Boundaries
Adapted from I. Clark's 1990 map
and
N. Tindale's 1940 map
Drawn by Colin Dean 1990


N.S.W.
Matrilineal Descent
25
Patrilineal Descent
Boys take the fathers Totem
Girls take mothers Totem
Map 4
Aboriginal Descent
Victorian Aboriginal Language Boundaries
Adapted from I. Clark's 1990 map
and
N. Tindale 1940 map

Map 5 Known and Possible Sacred Sites

Victorian Aboriginal Language Boundaries
Adapted from I. Clark's 1990 map
And N. Tindale's 1940 map

Destroyed
Possible Sacred Site
Possible Ceremonial Sites
Possible increase Site

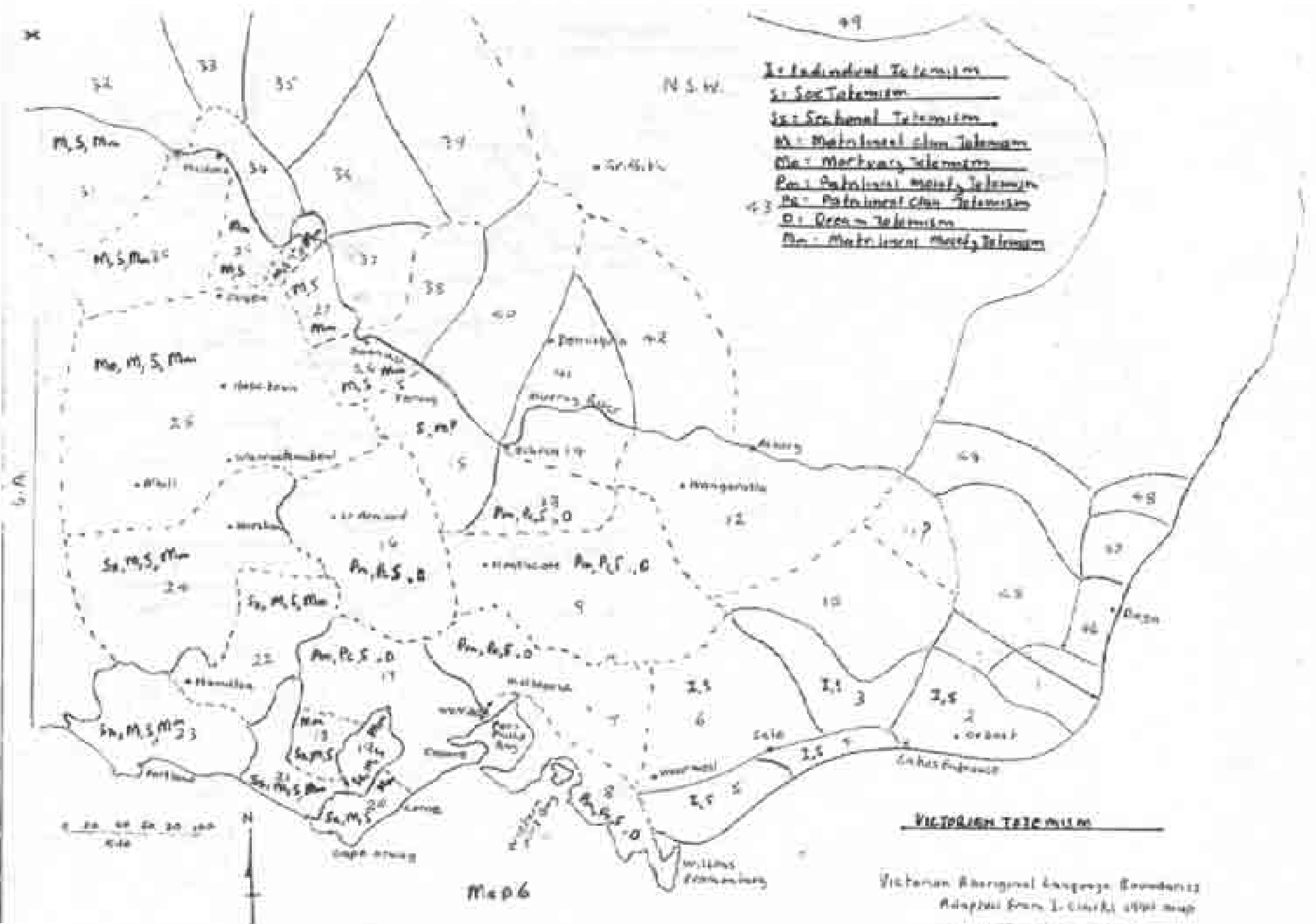
The Wergai had totem control the ... but their positions are unknown

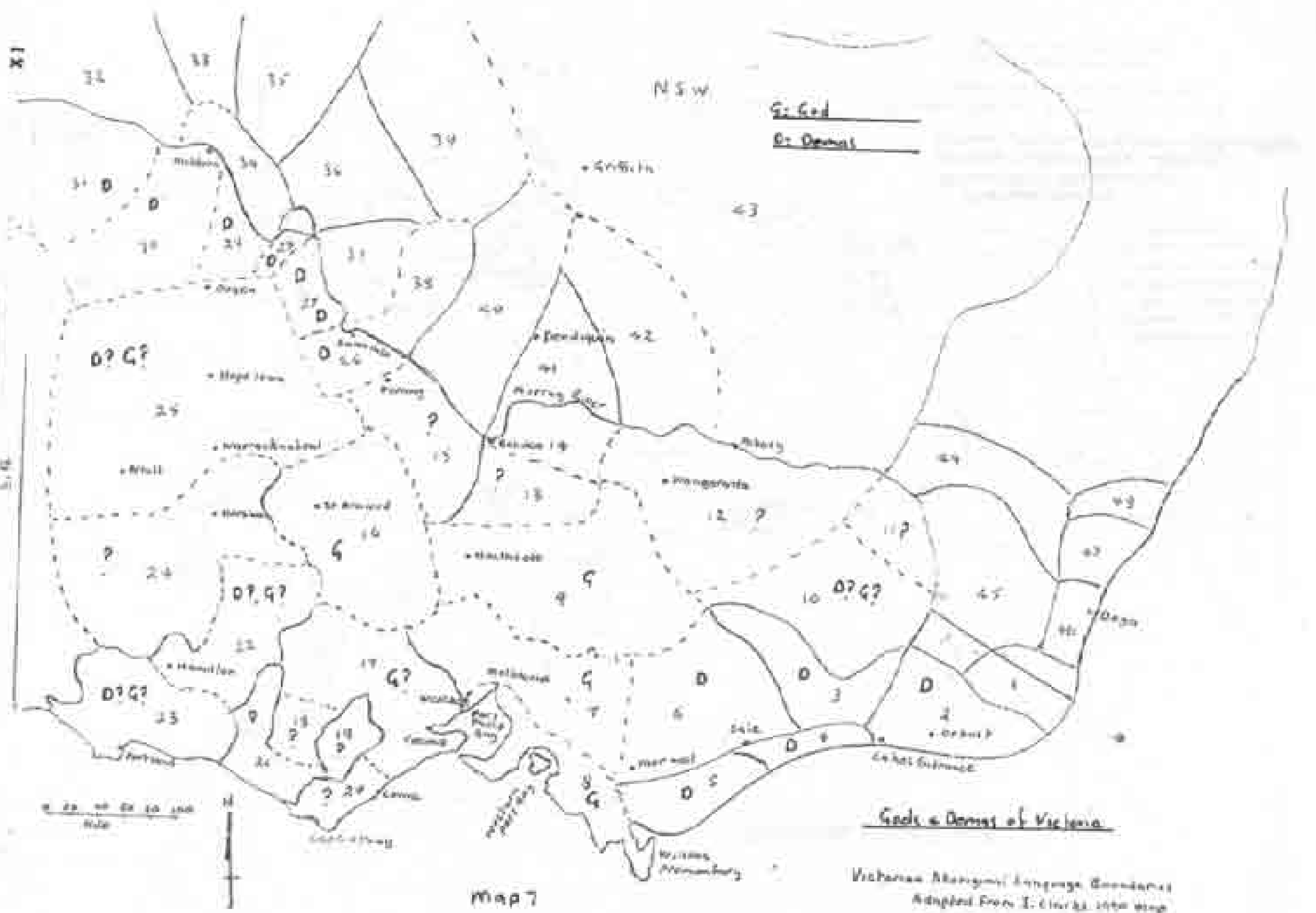
N.S.W.

S.A.

Melbourne
Port Phillip Bay
Geelong
Cape Schanck
Loan
Wilsons Promontory
Sale
Dandenong
Yarra River
Portland
Port Fairy
Lady Julia Percy Island
Hamilton
Lake Condah
Mount Elephant
Charlton
Swan Hill
Deniliquin
Albury
Murray River
Bega

32
33
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36
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I: Individual Totemism
S: Sex Totemism
Ss: Sectional Totemism
M: Matrilineal clan Totemism
Ma: Mortuary Totemism
Pm: Patrilineal moiety Totemism
Pc: Patrilineal clan Totemism
D: Dream Totemism
Mm: Matrilineal moiety Totemism
N.S.W.
S.A.
N
Murray River
Griffith
Deniliquin
Albury
Wangaratta
Echuca
Heathcote
Hamilton
Portland
Port Phillip Bay
Cape Otway
Wilsons Promontory
Sale
Orbost
Lakes Entrance
Eden
VICTORIAN TOTEMISM
Victorian Aboriginal Language Boundaries
Map 6


N.S.W.
G: God
D: Demons
Gods & Demons of Victoria
Victorian Aboriginal Language Boundaries
Map 7

XII

ORGANISED MEETING AREAS

N.S.W.

Murray River

Albury 1938

Lakes Entrance

Sale

Wilsons Promontory

+ Recorded meetings

⊙ Meetings during seasonal abundance

○ Meetings at which exchange occurred

⊕ Known initiation ceremonies

Organised Meetings
Adapted from I. McBryde's map
'Exchange in South Eastern Australia'
Aboriginal History, Vol 8, no 2, 1984, p. 153 (?)

Victorian Aboriginal Language Boundaries
Adapted from I. Clark's 1990 map
and McTierney's 1990 map
Drawn by Colin Oates 1990

MAP 8

RELIGIOUS SYSTEMS OF VICTORIA

Victorian Aboriginal Language Boundaries

N.S.W.

KULIN

KURNAI

YAITMATHANG?

MAP 9

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

"It is as if there were in the human consciousness a sense of reality, a feeling of objective presence, a perception of what we may call 'something there', more deep and more general than any of the special and particular 'senses' by which the current psychology supposes existent realities to be originally revealed"[1]

[1] W.James, The Varieties of Religious Experience,Penguin, 1987, p.58.

OVERVIEW Superficially there is a remarkable homogeneity in Aboriginal beliefs throughout Aboriginal Australia. Such beliefs as 'The Dreamtime' ,totemism, the sacredness of certain sites within the landscape, the importance of the land , initiation, beliefs about the soul, etc are believed throughout Australia. This uniformity in regard to certain beliefs it should be emphasised is only superficial ; at a deeper level of inquiry there is an even greater heterogeneity regarding the finer details of the above beliefs. This heterogeneity gives the Aboriginal cultures concerned a unique individuality ; an individuality such that as Charlesworth says "...we must be careful to remember that there is no one Aboriginal religion but rather many different religions with a general family resemblance"[2]. Now when it comes to the beliefs of the pre-contact Victorian Aborigines the information is both scanty and in the maim superficial. This superficiality and scantiness makes it almost impossible to penetrate to any great depth into the 'religion' of these people. Consequently the only way of ascertaining what the deeper levels of, the pre-contact Victorian Aborigines, religion were is by making some educated inductions from the beliefs current throughout Aboriginal Australia

Thus by looking at Aboriginal beliefs, through out Australia, this study will attempt to reconstruct the 'religion' of the pre- contact Victorian Aborigines. In order to do this reconstruction it should be first emphasised, that when it comes to Aboriginal 'religion' in general, our categories and concepts distort and misrepresent the belief system ; as W.E.Stanner notes " our categories of understanding , which cannot but be contemporary, are either theistic or scientific... they are quite unsuited to the

[2] M.Charlesworth, Religious Experience unit B study guide 3, Deakin university, 1988, p.19

facts..."[3] What also makes the task of interpretation difficult is the fact that these categories and concepts " ... also have to apply... to an unfamiliar ontology of life".[4]

In order then to interpret Aboriginal 'religion' in terms of our intellectual and conceptual system - and do justice to it - it is important then to become familiar with an 'unfamiliar ontology of life'. It is important to be able to relate their ontology in terms of something we are familiar with, something which is if possible similar to both traditions. If this similar medium can be found then the amount of distortion and misrepresentation will be less and we will be able to 'think Aboriginal'- to conceive of, understand and feel the 'religion' as the Aboriginal does. The Aboriginals perception of reality and hence his unfamiliar ontology of life is essentially mystical. The Aborigine is enveloped in an ambient atmosphere of mystical significance’s. This all pervading mystical experience of life make a translation into what is essentially an a non mystical language system problematical. The bridging between the Aboriginal consciousness and ours , the commonality which makes translation possible, this thesis will argue , is a 'religious' / mystical consciousness.

As chapter two will show defining what religion is, is an arbitrary exercise. Any definition of religion in fact defines the parameters of the investigation , in other words it determines what phenomena are going to be looked at and what phenomena is going to be excluded. Thus the topic religion can include a large range of data if the definition is all encompassing ,or it can include a limited range of data if the definition is all excluding. In focusing on the religious / mystical consciousness an

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[3]W.E.H.Stanner Religion, Totemism and Symbolisim in M.Charlesworth etal Religion in Aboriginal Australia,University of Queensland press, 1989, p.155

[4] ibid, p.155.

attempt to inter into the Aborigines consciousness is under taken. Stanner in talking of totemism argues that "... the key has yet to be made to fit true ; the philosophy has yet to be stated in a cogent way; and the respect in which it passes into the realm of religion still awaits a formulation that will allow comparisons with other religions"[5]. This study will argue that the key to understanding not only totemism but 'religion' per se is the Religious / mystical consciousness. The religious / mystical consciousness it is argued is the core of what ever the religious is , it is this consciousness that gives life to the beliefs by looking at belief not from an intellectual perspective, but from an emotional point of view. In looking at the religious / mystical consciousness the religion of the Victorian Aborigines will be analysed from the perspective of their feelings ie what and how they felt about their religious world and not from an intellectual elucidation of what they believed or did.

The religious / mystical consciousness is the core of what ever 'religion' is, without being it's defining essence. Chapter two will point out that 'religion' is a reification, and thus the search for it's essence is a futile exercise ; at the least it is an arbitrary endeavour. It thus follow that if any definition of religion is arbitrary, then it would appear then that any study of the religion of the Victorian Aborigines is only as good as the definition used .This is true, but because it is claimed that the religious / mystical consciousness is the underlying core which is common to all those phenomena which have been categorised under the label 'religion' ; then by studying the religious / mystical consciousness we in fact study the 'religion'.

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[5] Stanner op.cit, p.171

RELIGIOUS / MYSTICAL CONSCIOUSNESS This consciousness is not an intellectual realisation about the nature of reality, nor is it a union with a transcendent principle, it is a feeling ;an intangible ineffable feeling or awareness that there is a hidden order, a cryptic inner meaning beneath the mundane. The reality/realities apprehended by the 'religious' / mystical consciousness are the result of human sensibilities not rationality.

Because this consciousness mystical and is based upon feelings, not the intellectual, the nuances of the feelings which characterise this consciousness are to vague and ephemeral to be adequately expressed in prose. The medium best suited to express the subtitles of the 'religious' / mystical consciousness is the medium of poetry, or the literary style of romanticism . This is because poetry and romanticism is able to capture those deeper levels of meaning which lie outside the expressive capacity of mere words and sentences ; by using imagery and symbolism. W.E.Stanner in talking of Aboriginal 'religious' language makes the observation that "...[the symbolism of the Aborigines] conditions the capacity to express clear conceptions in words and sentences so that for the most part they remain beyond the symbolism of language"[6].

Now such things as : (1) the belief in spiritual beings (2) the 'numinous' experience (3) the sacred / profane dichotomy (4) totemism (5) animism (6) or any other definition of 'religion', are special manifestations of the more general phenomena of the Religious / mystical consciousness. The 'religious' / mystical consciousness is the infrastructure upon which the intellectualisation of theism, polytheism, totemism, animism etc are built. Without this infrastructure of transcendent meaning sensibly apprehended, 'religion' turns into philosophy. This is not to say that the 'religious' / mystical consciousness is the defining essence of 'religion, but only that what ever

[6] W.E.H.Stanner, Symbolism in the Higher Rites,Oceania Vol.xxx1, no.2, 1961, p.118

the 'religious' is, the 'religious' / mystical consciousness is the sensible foundation upon which it is built. The 'religious' / mystical consciousness (R / M consciousness) is to 'religion' what metre is to poetry , what notes are to music, what words are to ideologies; each is a foundation, while not being the defining essence. When we look at the Victorian Aborigines world view, through the perspective of the R / M consciousness, it will be seen that this world view is a constellation of diverse aspect or manifestations of the R / M consciousness. This constellation of diverse elements stops us from making the mistake of assuming that Victorian Aboriginal religion - and Australian as a whole - was solely totemistic, animistic, etc. The R / M consciousness perspective allow as to see the complex amalgamation which went to make up the total Victorian Aboriginal world view a world view which was essentially mystical. In using the perspective of the R / M consciousness this study of the religion of the Victorian Aborigines this will fall into two parts . This study will look at the beliefs and feelings of the Victorian Aborigines; as manifested through their R /M consciousness. This first part will study 1) the 'Dreamtime', 2) totemism, 3) Gods ,Demas, and Numina .

This study will show the R /M consciousness manifested itself, in pre-contact Victoria, in such a way that pre-contact Victoria was made up of at least five, may be six distinct, separate and unique religious systems. These systems correspond to the 1) **Kulin**, 2) **Kurnai** 3) the complex of tribes comprising the **Jardwadjali, Djab Wurrung, Dhauwurd Wurrung, Girai Wurrung, Gadubanud, Djargurg Wurrung** and **Gulidjan** of the South Western district 4) the **Wergia** of the North Western district 5) and possibly the **Yaitamang** of the highlands and 6) the Murray river tribes from Mildura to Echuca . These systems had their own idiosyncratic

natures and as such could only be understood in terms of themselves, not other systems

In looking at the Dreamtime cosmogonies chapter five will show that there where three different and distinct Dreamtime cosmogonical accounts within Victoria :1) the Western district ,2) Central Victoria and 3) Gippsland these three areas irrespective of the cosmogonical differences there was a common thread running through them . The night sky and the landscape have associated with them a deeper meaning which lies beneath mere phenomenal reality . This deeper meaning, the direct result of the R /M consciousness, puts the Aborigine in a certain emotive state of mind. The Aborigine is closer to nature, nature is not an unknowable entity, it has meaning. The Aborigine looked out upon the landscape and saw evidence as to the truth of the Dreamtime myths. Certain shapes, hills, rivers, ravines, stars constellations, e.t.c where directly related to certain Dreamtime characters; in some cases they where the transformed character, in other cases the direct result of their Dreamtime activity. The Aborigine lived in an environment charged with emotional significance, it's closest Western counter part would be the holy land of the Jews. The environment for the Aborigine was charged with a numinous import, the environment activated a wide range of emotions; it was saturated in an emotional ambience.

The R / M consciousness permeated the landscape such that the Aborigines perception, understanding and experience of it was mystical. Mystical in the sense that the Aborigine had an awareness of a hidden meaning, or, hidden order to and beneath mere phenomena. The R/ M consciousness widened the Aborigines ontological parameters of reality in such a way that there was a greater ontological

depth to reality. This increased depth to reality is what constituted the mystical understanding and experience of the landscape for the Aborigine. Now this mystical awareness of the landscape was not the totality of the Aborigines R / M consciousness , the total R / M consciousness was made up of a number of mystical aspect one of which was totemism. Just as the Aborigines total world view was not determined by their awareness of the landscape, so totemism can not be solely equated with this world view either. Chapter three will demonstrate that Victoria was made up of three different and distinct totemistic structures ie the matrilineal Western district, the patrilineal Central district and the anomalous Gippsland area; with it's sex totemism and individual totems.

Irrespective of these structural differences a common experience runs through and connects the structures. This common theme is mystical. The Victorian Aborigine was connected to his totemites and totems by a common life force. The awareness of this connecting principle gave the Aborigine a mystical insight into creation.

The totem transcended both space and time. Any individual totem past , present and future represented the whole and the whole represented the individual. The individual is the species , the species is the individual, here , there, everywhere and everywhen.

The totemites where kin they, where of the same 'flesh'. Each was a brother to other men, or sister to other females. Each had the same essence, the same life principle flowing through their being. As each was to each other , each was to the totem. Man, society, nature are fused together into a corporate whole; a living totality , each a part of an interconnected, entwined web of interrelationships.

The R / M consciousness pervades the Aborigines consciousness creating in him a mystical awareness of himself, society and nature. This awareness is seen most vividly when we encounter the Aborigines ideas and feelings associated with his Gods, Demas and numina. The Aborigines world was permeated by the feeling of a presence. This presence took the shape of a God , Demas or numina. Through out his world from the cave to the mountain top, from the river to the clouds, the Aborigine was always surrounded by the feeling of a presence. From the eerie to the reverential , from a quivering shudder to a clam, the Aborigines emotions encompassed a wide spectrum of feelings.

Chapter four will point out that there were two main beliefs regarding the Aborigines supreme beings. In central Victoria there appears to be a belief in a creator God. In the Western district and Gippsland on the other hand the Demas - beings, like those of the rest of Australia, who formed and moulded an already pre-existing unstructured world seems to be the dominant belief. This general pattern is high lighted by the knowledge that with in tribes there were local variations and between language groups there where differences. The connecting an unifying element which is common to the

whole of Victoria is the belief in numina. Though these beliefs where idiosyncratic and regional, they demonstrate the R / M consciousness in the most lurid light. The R / M consciousness permeates the Aborigines entire outlook. This outlook creates a multi-dimensional mosaic of interconnecting networks of mystical significance's. From the hidden meanings contained within the landscape and night sky, to the corporate structures contained in totemism , through to the permeating presence of the Gods, Demas and numina, the whole of the Aborigines experience of his world is profound at times sublime but always and wholly mystical. The stars shinning in the sky, a murmur in the leaves, the wind through the trees, birds flying bye, a bubbling brook , an animal's look , the earth under foot, all surrounding nature had a mystical significance ; a mysticism that permeated the entire universe.

Thus in summary the five religious systems of Victoria are called unique systems because they have a number of elements which are unique to the tribal complexes which make them up. The **Kurnia, Kulin**, the tribes of South Western Victoria (the **Maara**) the **Wergai** and **Barkunjee** tribes of the Murray River are seperate systems because the tribal complexes which make up these separate systems have at least four element in common to the separate system ie initiation rites, class systems, descent systems and totemism which make them unique from the other tribalsystems.. In this regard the **Yaithmathang** could be seen as a unique system because they have their own unique combination of initiation rites, and descent. Thus we can see that as an approximation the religious systems as seen in Map 8 seem to correspond to the forms of initiation and totemism in Victoria (see Map 3 & 6) and interestingly and not to the language boundaries (Map 1).

CHAPTER TWO

THE PROBLEM OF ASCRIBING THAT THE PRE-CONTACT VICTORIAN ABORIGINES WHERE RELIGIOUS

what is there in common in the set of things in which some general term is applicable ?...Nothing but the general term"[1]

[1] A.Quinton 1977 p.428

AMBIVALENCE

Did the pre-contact Victorian Aborigines posses a religion ? The answer to this question it would be assumed could be answered by those closest to them in time ,namely the Victorian colonial community of the 1800s. Now in the colonial period from 1835 to 1888 religion was regarded as the belief in and worship of a supreme being.

In regard to the holding of religious by the Victorian Aborigines, the colonial period was characterised by a varied and ambivalent attitude. The ambivalent attitude of the colonial community can be traced to a changing perception of the Aboriginal belief system in this period. From 1835 to the present there can be discerned three overlapping phases in regard to colonial attitudes about Victorian Aboriginal religion.

The first phase from 1835 to 1854 can be characterised by a total rejection as to an Aboriginal religion. The second phase from 1854 to 1888 is characterised by an ambivalence about Victorian Aboriginal religious beliefs. The third phase from 1888 to the presence is characterised by the affirmation of an Aboriginal religion.

FIRST PHASE

William Buckley ,who spent thirty five years with the **Watauronos**[2] [possibly the **Bengali** clan[3] of the *Wada wurrung* tribe from 1803 to 1835, argued in 1836 that though

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[2] G. Langhorne 1983, p.183

[3] L. Lane 1988, p.98

they have a vague ideas of some supernatural being Buckley said they don't "... possess any distinct notion of a Supreme Being as the maker of and ruler of the world..."[4] . The Rev. J. R. Orton speaking of the Port Phillip tribe [possibly the ***Woi Wurrung*** Aborigines in 1836 stated that though they held a doctrine of transmigration, "...after the minutest observation and strictest inquiry [he] could not discover that they possess the most indistinct notion of a Supreme Being - nor [had he] been able to ascertain that they have the slightest vestige of religious worship or superstitious observance."[5]

At about the same the as the Rev.J. Orton the Rev. Tuckfield claimed that the ***Wada Wurrung*** did not have "...the slightest vestige of religious worship nor the most indistinct notion of a Supreme Being"[6]; though they held ideas about the spirit and a future state. In the 1886 work of Bride Letters from Victorian Pioneers W. Thomas noted that D. E [A writer in a 1844 edition of ' The Geelong Advertiser'] stated that "...it is doubtful whether there exists among [the Aborigines] any notion of the existence of a Supreme Being which contains the slightest analogy to a revealed truth"[7]. D.E goes on to argue that the absence of any religious ideas could be due to the notion "...that people may have notions

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[4] G. Langhorne, op.cit , p.183

[5] Rev. J. R. Orton 1983, p.86.

[6] Rev Tuckfield 1983, P.107

[7] D.E In W. Thomas's 'Brief Account Of The Aborigines Of Australia Felix' in T.F. Brides ed Letters From Victorian Pioneers , Heinemann ,Melbourne ,1969 (ed) , p.420

of what perhaps their superstitious laws enjoin perfect silence upon, and much of this mute solemnity is to be observed in the character of the Aboriginal inhabitants of Australia..."[8]

SECOND PHASE

E.S. Parker, the Assistant Protector of Aborigines for the Loddon district, in his 1854 lecture The Aborigines Of Australia claimed that the Aborigines of his district [the **jarajawurrung** { ***Djadja Wurrung*** }] have "...very few and very crude ...religious notions...[t] hey have traditions among them of a Supreme benevolent Being [called]**Binbeal** as well as a being with superstitious wisdom, named **Punjil** or **Boonjil**..."[9] . Mr Mckellar giving evidence to a select committee of the legislative council of Victoria in 1858 stated that the Aborigines of his area "...do according to their worship the host of heaven..."[10] . The Rev W.Ridley writing in 1867 notes that the author of Remarks on the probable origin and antiquity of the Aboriginal natives of New South Wales states that "...the natives of the Loddon river have a tradition of a being possessing some of the attributes of a Supreme Being, to whom they assign the creation of the first man and women; the name of this being is **Binbeal**."[11] .P. Beveridge writing in 1861 claimed that

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[8] Ibid,p.420

[9] E.S. Parker 1967 ,p.24

[10] Mr Mckellar 1858-59,p.79

[11] Rev. W.Ridley 1867,P.277___

the Lake Boga tribe [***Gourrmjanyuk***] of the ***Wembawemba*** "...have no religion but believe in a good spirit...they have no ceremonies for propitiating this spirit...[called **Gnawdenoorte**] ..."[12]. In regard to the Goulburn and Murray river Aborigines W.Lock writing in Smyths 1873 book The Aborigines of Victoria stated that they believe evil spirits but "...[he] could never discover any thing among them approaching to religion...[his] opinion is that they have no religious notion or ideas whatever..."[13]

THIRD PHASE

In this phase a change in the definition of religion takes place. A.W.Howitt writing of the initiation ceremonies of the N.S.W. **Wolgal**, **Ngarego**, **Coast Murring**, **Wiraijuri**, and Victorian **Theddora**, in his 1884 article 'On some Australian Ceremonies of Initiation', claimed that these ceremonies where 'quasi religious' [14]. At the end of this article Howitt broadens the definition of religion held by the colonial period to incorporate a sociological aspect. Howitt states "...if religion is defined as being the formulated worship of a divinity the these savages [Australian Aborigines in general] have no religion ; but i venture to ascribe that it can no longer be maintained that they have no belief that can be called

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[12] P.Beveridge 1861 p.18

[13] W.Lock 1972, p.295

[14] A.W.Howitt 1884, p.457.

religion- that is, in the sense of a belief which governs tribal and individual morality under a supernatural sanction"[15]

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Though Howitt is quite clear in claiming the Aborigines where 'religious' in the above, in other cases he seems to believe the opposite. In a 1901 article, not published until 1939, Howitt claims the Victorian Aborigines where at a stage just prior to 'religion' as he says: "although it cannot be alleged that these aborigines have consciously any form of religion it may be said that their beliefs are such that under favourable conditions, they might have been developed into an actual religion, based on the worship of Mungan-ngaua, or Baiame".[16]

In 1912 the French sociologist E.Durkheim published his seminal work The Elementary Forms Of The Religious Life Using some of the material of A.W.Howitt [as well as others], Durkheim in this work sort to discover the essential defining characteristics of the religious. It should be kept in mind that Durkheim already new what the religious was ,and in this work he sought to delineate it's essence . For Durkheim religion divided the world up into the sacred and the profane and according to Durkheim the world of the Aborigines of Victoria was made up of this dichotomy; thus they where religious.

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[15] Ibid,p.459

[16] A.W.Howitt 1975, p.19

With the publication of Durkheim's work the anthropological and sociological disciplines have hence forth regarded the Aborigines of Australia and thus Victoria as being religious. This fact is considered so obvious that it is very rare that an anthropologist when dealing with the religion of the Australian Aborigines will give a definition of this concept-it is taken for granted.

In 1926 the Rev.J.Mathew wrote a 16 page article called The religious cults of the Australian Aborigines[17] in this article he deals with the Victorian Aborigines , but no where does he say what he means by the term 'religion'. Similarly R.Berndt in his book Australian Aboriginal Religion though he acknowledges his theoretical debt to Durkheim does not give a definition of religion when he talks of the magico-religious nature of the Victorian religion[18]. A.Massola writing of the Victorian Aborigines in his 1971 book The Aborigines of South-Eastern Australia, As They Where, does not give a definition of religion, since he says "[r]eligion is not the correct term to describe the Aborigines be-liefs..."[19]. Massola seems to revert back to the colonial periods definition of religion when he says they had no religion "...since they had neither gods or priests[20]".

[17] Rev.J.Mathew 1926,pp.524-539

[18] R.M.Berndt 1974, pp1-31, p22-23

[19] A.Massola 1971 A, p.32

[20] A.Massola 1971 B, p.32

The above account, of the views regarding whether the Victorian Aborigines had a religion, demonstrates the process by which a concept is modified by a new range of data and how the present data is then understood in terms of the wider concept.

DEFINITION

W.C.Smith The Meaning And End Of Religion tells as after examining a wide range of definitions of religion that there is w "...bewildering variety of definitions..."[21] were there is a "...repeated failure to agree..."[22] In examining the theories of religion up to 1965 Evans-Pritchard in his book Theories of primitive religion argued that '...[they do not] give us much more than common- sense guesses, which for the most part miss the mark [and] of the many attempts [none] is wholly satisfactory"[23]. C.Geertz in 1966 said that the field of anthropology had no ..."theoretical framework to provide an analytic account of religion"[24].

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[21] W.C Smith The Meaning And End Of Religion 1962, p.51
1975, p.51

[22] ibid, p.51

[23] E.Evans-Pritchard 1965, p.20-21.

[24] C.Geertz 1966,pp.1-4.

W.C.Smith, notes in his book The Meaning And End Of Religion after talking about the bewildering complex of definitions of religion and the failure of specialists to agree, puts forward a proposition, which though he eventually denies, sums up the end result of the reification process-:

"In this instance one might argue that the sustained inability to clarify what the word 'religion' signifies, in itself suggests that the term ought be dropped; that it is a distorted concept not really corresponding to anything definite or distinctive in the objective world..."[25]

The inability to clarify what the term 'religion' signifies, with the result that specialists can not agree on a definition, stems from the fact that the only thing 'religious' data has in common, is the term itself. The vacuity of the term 'religion' can be seen when the various definitions - of what the Penguin Dictionary of religion says "...is arbitrary and artificial"[26] -

Thus it can be seen that the question of whether the pre-contact Victorian Aborigines where religious is only a matter of definition. The definition one adopts is a subjective endeavour . An endeavour which is directed by ones political, theoretical or aesthetic dispositions.

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[25] W.C.Smith, op.cit, p.16

[26] Penguin Dictionary of Religion ed J.R.Hinnells Penguin ,1984, p.270.

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CHAPTER THREE

TOTEMISM AMONG THE PRECONTACT VICTORIAN ABORIGINES

“Here is a typical reconciliation of the polar opposites of the ‘outside’ and the ‘inside’, of the ‘objectiv’ and the subjective’, and the sense of the familiar phenomenal self being not the real self.”[1]

[1] F.C.HAPPOLD 1970, p.53.

DISPUTE

Ever since the work of the Russian-American ethnologist Alexander Goldenweiser, 'totemism'- a relationship between an individual or group and a natural object , the totem - as a phenomena has been subjected to sharp criticism. This criticism is centred around the ideas as to whether totemistic phenomena forms a unity and whether totemism is in fact illusory.

Goldenweiser considered that totemic phenomena did not form a unity. Goldernweiser thought that totemism formed three distinct groups of phenomena which only coincided together in the rarest of cases. According to Goldenweiser the three totemic groups where: 1) clan organisation. 2) the clan either taking on animal or plant names or having emblems which where derived from nature. 3) belief that there was a relationship between the totem and the group. Goldernweiser in 1915-16 and again in 1918 argued. against Lang , Frazer and Durkheim, that totemism had nothing to do with religion.[2]

Tylor in 1899 makes the same claim when he notes "what I venture to protest against is the manner in which totems have been placed almost at the foundation of religion... [totemism] has been exaggerated out of proportion to its real theological magnitude"[3]

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[22] Jo.H. , 1986, p.581

[3]E.B.Tylor 1899, p.143

Franz Boas the American ethnologist in 1916 like Goldernweiser maintained that totemism formed an artificial unity; since totemic features appear in different cultural contexts and as a consequence totemic phenomena could not be fitted into a single category. The English anthropologist A.R.Radcliffe- Brown, like Boas, was also sceptical about the reality of totemism. Radcliffe-Brown thought totemism to be made up of diverse elements taken from different institutions and areas. These elements Radcliffe-Brown thought have in common a tendency to characterise segments of the community by or through a portion of nature.[4]

A.P.Elkin the Australian anthropologist in 1932-33 argued , like the above authors, that totemism did not form a unity, since totemism “...is not a single and simple phenomenon but a term used to cover a number of diverse phenomena of social, religious and magical significance.”[5] Elkin distinguished or categorised four types of totemism: 1) individual 2) social ie patrilineal social totemism, matrilineal social totemism, section, sub-section , sex, moiety, 3) clan ie matrilineal , patrilineal, patrilineal local horde- cultic 4) dream, which may be A) a derivative of cult totemism though its function appears to be social B) or like individual totemism .[6] . Thus for Elkin there is not one totemism but many totemisms.

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[4] Jo.H, op.cit, p.582

[5] A.P.Elkin 1932-33 A, p.257

[6] A.P.Elkin, , 1933 D, p.128

The most prestigious critique of totemism to date is the work of the French anthropologist Levi-Strauss. In his book Totemism Levi-Strauss maintains that totemism is an illusion. Levi-Strauss criticizes Elkin for wanting to preserve the reality of totemism by denying its unity but reducing it to a multiplicity of types; as levi-Strauss says “Elkin thinks he can reify totemism on the single condition of atomising it”[7]. For Levi-Strauss “ totemism ... is illusory, not just [a] unity “[8]. Levi-Strauss considered totemism to be a picture imposed on the natural world not taken from it[9] - this is something similar to the function of the Kantian categories. Totemism demonstrates mans propensity to classify. Levi-Strauss maintains the totemism demonstrates antithetical thinking and believed the various similarities in totemic ideas among cultures lay in the similarities between the way social groups classify the natural world.[10] Boas said a similar thing in 1916 when he noted “the homology of distinguishing marks of social divisions of a tribe is proof that they are due to a classificatory tendency”[11]

Now even if all totemic phenomena can not be considered to constitute a single category, the reality of totemic phenomena cannot be denied. Even if Levi-Strauss is right and totemisms

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[7] C.Levi- Strauss, , 1962, p.45

[8]ibid. p.45

[9] Jo.H, op.cit p.583

[10] ibid p.583

[11]F.Boas, ' 1916, p.326

serves as a basic scheme of classification , it is not possible to dispose of totemism as an illusion. Meggitt sharply criticise Levi-Strauss based upon his Walbiri research as he states "...I disagree sharply with such assertions as 'totemism is an artificial unity existing solely in the mind of the anthropologist to which nothing specifically corresponds in reality' a statement refuted by the Australian evidence"[12].

AUSTRALIA

The ethnographic examples of Elkin and others, demonstrate that within Australia there is a relationship between groups and / or individuals and certain objects of nature. This material highlights the fact that if there is not a unitary category called totemism, there is nevertheless a common theme uniting the totemisms; because it runs through all the totemisms. All the totemism's take us to the heart of the Aborigines world view, they combine to be 1) the core of his spirituality, 2) the cement of his social relationships, 3) to ordains his relationships with nature and give him his philosophy of life and his explanations of existence ; as Elkin says: "totemism[s] is not merely a system of nomenclature, of food and sex taboos or of ceremonial life. It takes us to the aborigines philosophy of life, nature and conduct, to what spiritually controls his outlook and action and it is so intertwined with other factors of social life, that the latter can not be understood apart from and through knowledge of it"[13]

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[12]Meggitt, 1989, p.134, n.17

[13] A.P.Elkin _1932-33 A, p.259

SOCIAL TOTEMISM

Sociologically social totemism is generally concerned with marriage arrangements and the propriety of human relationships. Elkin makes the point that social totemism "is nearly always, perhaps always matrilineal in descent"[14]. Social totemism is made up of moiety totemism - matrilineal, patrilineal- , section totemism, sub-section totemism and sex totemism.

MATRILINEAL MOIETY TOTEMISM

Matrilineal moiety totemism is found in Western Victoria, Queensland, New South Wales, Eastern South Australia and an area in the south-west of Western Australia. Where this form of totemism is found it is believed that a kinship exist between all members of a moiety and an object of nature. Now it is generally believed that there is no common descent from the totem which gives it's name to the moiety. What is believed is that a life principle is shared in common with the totem[s] and the totemists[15] - one flesh and blood is inherited through the mothers. "The totem symbolises the bond between mother and child and between children and mother, or at least one of the matrilineal ancestors. It is referred to as flesh; sometimes as brother... [and] a mystic bond exists between the totemites and the totem"[16].

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[14] A.P.Elkin 1974, p.173

[15] A.P.Elkin , 1933 C,pp.80-81

[16] ibid, p.82

In matrilineal totemism there is usually trend to avoid eating or killing the totem. Each clan in a matrilineal group not only includes people of one totem but also a number of other sub-totems. In matrilineal totemism man and nature are classified into totemic clans, thus indicating "...the oneness of life of nature and man..."[17]

PATRILINEAL MOIETY TOTEMISM

Patrilineal moiety totemism is found in East Arnhem Land, Central Australia , part of Cape York Peninsular Northern Kimberley[18] and as we shall see possibly Central Victoria. Elkin notes that patrilineal moiety totemism when it appears " is correlated with a strong local organisation into patrilineal hordes combined with a theory of localised human spirit-centres and of localised cult totemism, which is either patrilineal or tends to be so, and is ideally so"[19]

Now irrespective of whether it is matrilineal or patrilineal moiety totemism there is a ritual attitude held by the members of the moiety towards the natural objects or species [totems]. This ritual attitude is held irrespective of whether the moiety is divided into matrilineal social clans or patrilineal cult clans or whether or not these clans have multiple totems[20]

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[17] A.P.Elkin, 1933 D, p.121.

[18] Elkin 1933 C,p.88

[19] ibid,p.88

[20] A.P.Elkin ' 1933, D p.119

SECTION TOTEMISM

Section totemism a means by which the members of a tribe are divided up into groups .This division classifies the members of a section with certain natural objects; "... a system of classification of man and nature on the basis of the kinship which is held to exist between the human beings and the natural species belonging to each section.[21] .In such systems a member of a section has a ritual attitude towards to his own or other totems of his section.[22] Likewise the totem is considered a friend ie guardian or mate to the members of the section.[23]

SUB-SECTION TOTEMISM

As there was no sub-section totemism in Victoria[24] , this section will not be delineated.

SEX TOTEMISM

Sex totemism is found in tribes on the coasts of New South Wales, Lake Eyre, the North-Western **Aranda** on the Finke river, the **Matuntara** a neighbour of the **Alurindja** and in Central

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[21] A.P.Elkin 1933 D, p.119

[22] ibid, p.119

[23] ibid, p.119

[24] A.W.Howitt, ,1888 , pp..31-71

Victoria , Western Victoria and Gippsland. Levi-Strauss is completely wrong when he says “sex totemism seems to be associated with matrilineal moieties [in Victoria]”[25], because as we shall see sex totemism is found amongst the patrilineal **Kulin** tribes of Central Victoria. Sex totemism is characterised by the belief that a natural species[s] is associated with each sex eg the bat for men and the wren for women. In all cases though it is believed that “ a common life [is] shared by man [and women] and the natural species...”[26]. With though tribes of Central Australia with sex totemism there is an emphasis on the role of motherhood in determining the totem as well as a ceremonial solidarity among women and a respect for the mothers totem[27]. The Reverend L.E.Threlkeld the first to discover this form of totemism noted “Tilmun a small bird... is supposed by the women to be the first maker of women or to be a women transformed after death into that bird... these birds a held in veneration by the women only the bat... is held in veneration on the same ground by the men who suppose the animal(bat) a mere transformation”[28].

CLAN TOTEMISM

In clan totemism the members of the clan consider themselves as related to one another as well as related to some natural object. This object or totem has some ritual attitude adopted towards it by the members of the clan. The members of a clan usually refuse to eat of kill the totem and

[25] Levi-Strauss op.cit,p.38

[26] Elkin op.cit,p.115

[27] ibid, p.117

[28] R.H.Mathews 1904 A, p.339.

make it the centra of some organised ceremonial activity on which both the the life of the totem and the tribe are believed to depend. The relationship expressed in this "... totemism may be based on what are regarded as blood ties on membership of a common horde country, or primarily, on a mythological and "spiritual" ancestry"[29]. Clan totemism comes in two forms matrilineal and patrilineal.

MATRILINEAL CLAN TOTEMISM

In matrilineal clan totemism the individual is believed to inherit his body flesh or blood from his mother. Now because the members of the totem regard themselves as one flesh they abstain from killing or injuring the totem; this is because it is believed that the life of man is in the life of the totem. In matrilineal clan totemism man and the creation are classified together into totemic clans. Each clan not only includes a matrilineal group of members belonging to the same totem but also a number of members belonging to sub-totems; these sub-totems are subsidiary to the clan since they are classified in the group named after it.[30]

PATRILINEAL CLAN TOTEMISM

In patrilineal totemism there is a kinship between each member of the totem , this solidarity is due to the belief that the spirits of each member of the local horde "... pre-existed in definite

[29] Elkin, op.cit, p.120

[30] ibid, pp.120-121

spirit centres in the horde country' so that the bond between them and their "country" is a spiritual one"[31]. These pre-existent spirits and spirit centres have myths associated with them , dealing with ancestors, or heroes who belong to the same totem or totems[32] Matrilineal clan totemism deals with relations of flesh and blood ie it is concerned with social issues such as marriage organisation. Patrilineal clan totemism on the other hand adds nothing to the marriage rules it is concerned with the spiritual ideas and the cult life of the tribe ; " the members of such a totemic clan are joint owners of a set of myths and rites around a hero or heroes of their own totemic clan and generally, too , around the species which gives them their totemic name"[33] Membership of a cult totem indicates membership of a secret and sacred cult-society of which there may be many in a tribe.[34]

AUSTRALIA

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[31] ibid, p.122

[32] ibid, p.122

[33] ibid,pp.123-124

[34] ibid, p.124

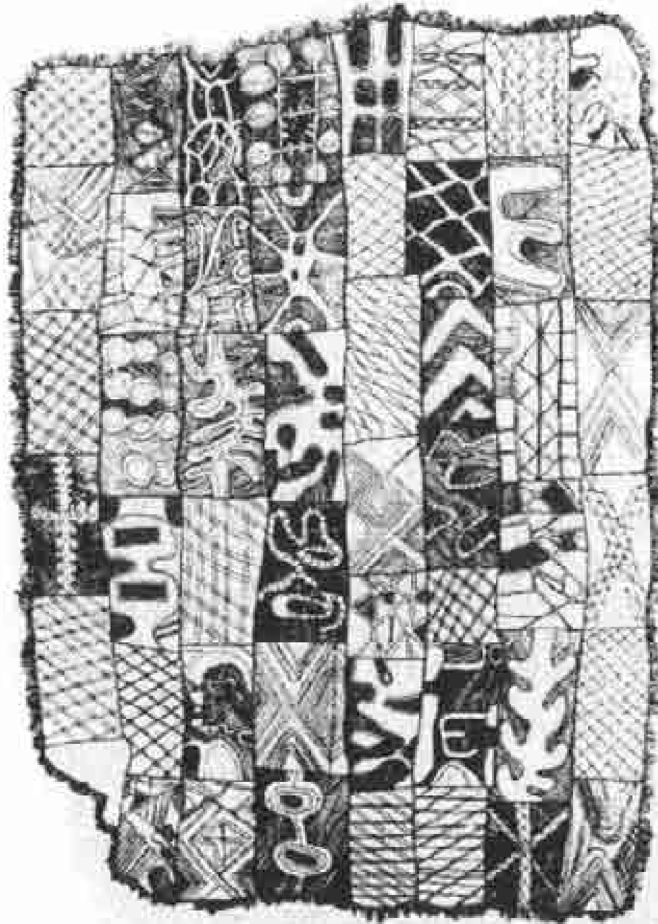
Australian totemism is characterised by the awareness that the relationship which exists between the subject/s and it's object is a mystical relationship; as Elkin notes, in talking about matrilineal and cultic totemism, "... a mystic bond exist between the totemites and the totem."[35]. Because of this mystical relationship it is easy to identify Aboriginal religion solely with totemic phenomena . This study will show that to characterise Aboriginal religion solely as totemic is to misrepresent the Aboriginal religion. A true appreciation of the character of Victorian Aboriginal religions is brought about by understanding that the religion is based upon the R/M consciousness. This R/M consciousness was expressed through totemism but also by the way it refracted into other diverse and distinct elements such as the numina, the Dreamtime., sacred sites and the Gods and Demas.

VICTORIA

The classification used to characterise Victorian Aboriginal totemism is the one put forward by Elkin in his 'Studies in Australian Totemism. It will be shown that Victorian Aboriginal totemism is made up of : 1) individual totemism, 2) matrilineal moiety totemism, 3) matrilineal clan totemism 4) patrilineal moiety totemism, 5) patrilineal clan totemism, 6) section totemism, 8) sex totemism, 9) dream totemism and) mortuary totemism, which Elkin does not mention, but appears to be peculiar to Victoria ie the **Wergai** (**Wotjoballuk**) of the Western district.

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[35] A.P.Elkin ' 1933, C p.82



Line drawing of possum skin cloak obtained from Lake Condah Aboriginal station, 1872 in the Territory of the Kerup Gundidj in the land of the Dhauwurd Wurrung. (C.P. Mountford, 'Decorative Aboriginal Skin Rugs', Records South Australian Museum, Vol. 13,1960, pp. 505 - 8) The meanings of the designs on the rugs are conjectual. Some think they were representations or maps of the land from where the wearer came. Some argue that they were his private clan signs. These rugs were engraved by the men to be worn on special occations with other groups.

FIG 1

THE TOTEM OVERVIEW

Howitt notes that the term totem refers to the name which are borne by certain groups or divisions of the Aboriginal society.[36] The members of the groups according to Howitt are "...considered as being of the same blood and decent is ... borne by the individual ...[being inherited from the mother or the father according as decent is counted in the female line or in the male"[37]. Now even though the individual bears a totem name he / she has also his/ her own proper name "... which is often in abeyance because of the disinclination to use it or even to make it generally known least it might come into knowledge and possession of some enemy, who thus having it might thereby "sing" it's owner- in other words use it as an "incantation"[38].

To each primary class of a moiety there may belong a number of totems and in some cases on primary class may also have more totems.[39] Howitt notes that he only has evidence of the same totem belonging to both moiety divisions.[40]. The totemite in many cases cannot eat and kill his

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[36] A.W.Howitt 1888 ,p.51

[37]ibid, p.51

[38] ibid,p.51

[39] ibid ,p.52

[40] ibid, p.52

totem also it is considered a serious offence for him to kill any one else's totem.[41] Howitt makes the interesting point that the "../ totems seem to be much *nearer* to the Aborigines ... than the primary classes"[42].

Howitt argues, as does R.H.Mathews[43], that throughout a large proportion of South-East Australia "...the general identity of structure and of the fundamental laws of the classes over wide areas proves beyond doubt that these varying forms are substantially equivalents...[there is] absolute identity and equivalence of the fundamental "primary classes"[44]. The boundaries of a class system are in most cases larger than the boundary of a single tribe and the boundaries of a type of system , which include nations -aggregates of tribes - are wider still. Howitt notes that the **Krokitch-Wartwut** division of the **Wotjoballuk** tribe of the Wimmera was considered to be equivalent to the **Kipara** and the **Wotjoballuk** **Gamutch** was equivalent to the **Mokwara** in the New South Wales **Maraura** tribe. Also the **Kroki** and **Kumit** classes around Warrnambool was equivalent to **Bunjil** and **Waa** divisions respectively of Central Victoria.[45]

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[41] ibid, p.53

[42] ibid, p.53

[43] R.H.Mathews. 1898, p.242-243

[44] Howitt op.cit p.35

[45] ibid, p.36-37

The folk lore of the Aborigines, Howitt notes, was full of reference to the totems - in some cases they where about supernatural beings who peopled the sky, sea and land. These stories where about animals which behaved like the Aborigines and where often began like "... a long time ago when the animals where men.."[46] In these stories Howitt claims that it was not easy to tell whether the animals where anthropomorphic or the men theriomorphic.[47] Howitt could not say whether the tales where invented to fit the totems or whether they had a simultaneous growth - the view he favoured. Nevertheless when it came to accounting for the origins of the moiety divisions, these where not said to have been instituted by the totems but instead by a supernatural being like <u>**Bunjil**</u> speaking through the mouth of a wizard[48].

Howitt and Mathews note that all nature was divided up between the primary class. According to Howitt the "...Aborigines say of these things "they belong to them"[49]. All the object which are contained in the class are themselves divided up among the totems: "..each totem claims a certain number of the natural objects which are not all animals, for there are also a star, fire, wind &"[50]. In the Western district Matthew's likewise noted that all creation- the animate and inanimate -

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[46] ibid, p.53

[47] ibid, p.53

[48] ibid, p.54

[49] ibid p.62

[50] ibid, p.61

was divided up among the divisions[51] .Though Howitt does not give any detail as what exactly was the scheme of dividing the world up was , Howiit nevertheless gives as a clue to what this might of meant for the Aborigines of Victoria. In Howitt's article On the organisation of Australian tribes tell as that the **Wakelbura** of New South Wales divided the world up between their two divisions **Malera** and **Wuthera** what this meant was that if a man sent a message stick this had to be made from the tree which belonged to his division. If a made was to perform magic the object he could use had to belong to his class. When a man died he could only be covered over by material from his own class[52]. Now though Howitt is reticent on this point Mathews gives quite a lot of detail regarding the division of the world according to the tribes between the Avoca river and the South Australian boarder ie **Wergaia**.

Mathews records that a man would lay the head of a dead animal in the direction of it's **miyur**. A hunter would carry weapons which where made from the trees belonging to each class division. If he where to throw a missile this would be made from an opposite divisions objects to the animals ; in other words an animal is killed by using weapons made from material which does not belong to the division it belongs to . A curious belief was that if a man missed an animal it was believed that either the animal was from the same division as the wood used or perhaps the animal was partly belonging to the division from which the weapon was made[53].

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[51] R.H.Mathews 1904, B p.69

[52] A.W.Howitt 1889, p.100

[53]R.H.Mathews , 1904, A p.293-294

From the above it can be seen that sociologically totemism has a pervasive effect upon the Aboriginal world. Totemism defines the social system and determines the classification of creation; it is in terms of totemism that Aboriginal tales are understood and it is terms of totemism that a trans territorial and tribal affinity is set up. Now irrespective of the sociological pervasiveness of totemism, it could be said that the psychological aspects of totemism equally important for the individual.

Psychologically totemism comes to define the individuals personal self and place in the grand scheme of things. In the aspects individual, social, clan, sex and dream totemism, totemism gives to the individual a multi dimensional personality made up of diverse totemic essences. Now these sociological and psychological aspects of totemism create a multi dimensional network of inter personal ties and contacts between man and nature. This interconnecting web of relevance's is made up of elements belonging to : individual, social, clan, sex , dream and mortuary totemism.

INDIVIDUAL TOTEMISM

Individual totemism is found in Central Australia, North and North-Western Australian and the Eastern states, being quiet common in New South Wales . Where individual totemism occurs there is thought to be a personal relationship between a particular species and an individual - mainly a medicine man. The totem usually assist the totemite and guards him. The totem is the

sacramental form of his own self, it is both inside him and outside him, the medicine man both represents himself and represents the self of totem.[54]

KURNIA

From the available ethnological data the only known Victorian Aboriginal group which believed in individual totemism where the **kurnia** of Gippsland. Howitt, in his book Native tribes of South-East Australia , notes that the **Kurnia** doctors (**Mulla mullung**) had a familiar animal or reptile. This familiar was considered to be his second self of spirit as well being externalised in the species. The familiar was believed to work the will of the doctor at night.[55] When it came to ascertaining how the doctor came to have a familiar, Howitt found that they where extremely reticent on the subject. Howitt notes " the subject... I found to be of almost insuperable difficulty. The blackfellow doctors surround themselves with profound mystery...:[56]. Now irrespective of this reticence certain clues regarding the acquiring of an individual totem appear in the work of Howitt.

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[54] A.P.Elkin _1933, D pp.113-115

[55] A.W.Howitt. 1904 _p.147, pp.387-388.

[56] A.W.Howitt , 1887 ,p.47.

Howitt records that one of the Brataua clan dreamed twice that he had become a lace lizard "... and as such had assisted at a corroboree of these reptiles"[57] In this way he believed that he had acquired power over them. The lizard lived in the camp with him and accompanied him where ever he went; sitting on his shoulder. It was believed that the lizard warned him of danger and assisted in tracking down his enemies IT was also believed that he could send the lizard out at night to injure people. Now because of the comradeship between him and the lizard he was called **Bunjil Batalak** "... probably he was in some manner one of them..."[58]

In a similar manner Howitt records a wizard of the **Brabra** clan dreamed three times that he was a kangaroo and participated at a corroboree of these animals. This wizard because of his kinship with the kangaroo could not eat the meat of the kangaroo on which there was blood , nor could he carry one with blood on it. When it came to eating the meat of the kangaroo this had to be cooked and then passed to him by someone else ; if he where to touch or eat any kangaroo meat with blood on it the **mrarts** (spirits) would no longer take him up into the sky[59].

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[57] ibid, p.34

[58] ibid,p.34

[59] ibid, p.45

WESTERN VICTORIA

Matrilineal totemism appears in the West of Victoria and in the North East of Eastern Victoria. In Western Victoria there was moiety and clan totemism There where four main matrilineal moieties in this area each having clan totemism as well : 1) the **Karperap** (pelican)/**Krokage** (white coackatoo) and **Kartuk** (whipsnake)/**Kubitch** (black coackatoo) moiety of central Western Victoria, 2) the **Krotich** [white cockatoo] / **Gumutch** [black cockatoo] of Northern Western Victoria and 3) in the extreme South-West of Western Victoria a four section matrilineal system which was divided up into two unnamed divisions ie **Kuurokeetch** [long billed cockatoo] /**Kartpoerapp** [pelican] and **Kappatch** [banksia cockatoo] /**Kirtuuk** [boa snake] and the non related section **Kuunamit** (Quail).[60] 4) the **Mukwara / Keelpara** of the extreme North - West of Western Victoria.

DHAUWURDWURRUNG, GIRAIWURRUNG, GADUBANUD, DJARGURDWURRUNG

Sectional , matrilineal clan, sex totemism ? *matrilineal moiety*

There is not much information regarding the totemism of the extreme South-West of Western Victoria ,but since Dawson gives information about the class divisions of the **Maara** people of the Hopkins river; it could be assumed that this information applies to all the **Maara** of the South West of Western Victoria .

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[60] J.Dawson R.P.T 1981 (1881),P.26-27

Dawson notes that the **Kauurokeetch** and **Kartoerapp** where regarded as sister classes and no marriage was allowed within them or between them, the same was true for the **Kappatch** and the **Kirtuuk**.[61] Dawson notes that if the laws of marriage are carried out correctly the there should be no marriage between thoughs of the 'one flesh'[62] Now apart from these division of the society there is no mention in Dawson's book regarding any other totems belonging to these divisions. R.H.Mathews on the other does make mention of them.

Mathews notes that the **Gurogity** (**Kuurokeetch**) had twenty totems made up of animal and flora Mathews also noted that the **Kappaty** (**Kappatch**) had also twenty totems made up of flora and fauna[63]. According to Mathews these totems themselves belonged to totemic families ie clans Mathews which in tern belonged to their respective primary division. Mathews mentions that the members of any of the clans on death went to the same spirit home called the **maioga** in some of the dialects and in others **mung-o** on and island called **Dhinmar** - where they remained until reincarnated[64] or - or according to Dawson **Deen Maar** -Julia Percy island[65].

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[61] ibid p.26

[62] ibid,p.28

[63] R.H. Mathews op.cit,p.294-295

[64] IBID.p.297

[65] Dawson op.cit, p.51

From the slight mention of ‘one flesh’ we can assume that there was regarded a kinship between members of the divisions and the animal species. Consequently if this form of matrilineal totemism is the same as that found through out the rest of Australia we could also assume that a common life principle was considered to be within the totemits’ and the respective totems. Though there is no direct mention of sex totemism Dawson notes that “ the grey bandicoot belongs to the women and is killed and eaten by them but not by the men or children”[66] This mention of Dawson could indicate the presence of sex totemism ; the non presence of sex totemism would be out of character with the Western district and thus it would be expected.

DJABWURRUNG JARDWADJALI

Moiety, matrilineal clans? sex totemism ?

If there is little information regarding the South-West of Western Victoria there is even less regarding the Pelican / Whip snake people. Though Howitt thought the pelican and whip snake were not sectional names but were instead totemic names, Mathews instead regards them as sectional names; following as he says Dawson’s characterisation.[67] Howitt notes that the divisions were **Karperap** (pelican)/**Krokage** (white coackatoo) and **Kartuk** (whipsnake)/ **Kubitch** (blackcoackatoo) (Howitt , 1904, p.125). It would also be expected that there was matrilineal clans as well as sex totemism since these are present in the rest of the Western district.

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[66] ibid, p.22, 52

[67] J.Mathews op.cit, p.85-86

WERGAIA

Moiety , matrilineal clan, sex totemism, mortuary totemism.

The North-Western tribes of Western Victoria ie the **Wergaia** where divided into two divisions the white cockatoo and the black cockatoo. These to divisions according to Howitt where found over a wide extent of country in slightly different forms ; probably due to dialectical differences[68]. Mathews says that they occurred from the Avoca river West ward towards the South Australian border.[69] Now both Mathews and Howitt deal with these tribes but there information is in some cases different, this could be due to the fact that their information was derived from different tribes.

According to Howitt the **Wotjoballuk** were a good example of the tribes with these divisions. The **Wotjoballuk** where divided into the **Krotitch** and **Gamutch** divisions . The **Krokitch** was then divided into eight totemic sub-divisions or **mirs** and the **Gamutch** into at least four totemic sub-divisions - these sub-divisions where not like sections as they did not regulate marriage ie so long as the primary divisions where exogamous any of the totems of a primary division could marry any totem of the other division. Now while these totemic sub-divisions also had what Howitt called pseudo totems attached to them , they also had their own mortuary totems - these

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[68]A.W.Howitt 1888 ,p.60

[69] R.H.Mathews op.cit, p.329

where only applied to an individual after death[70]. A number of the sub-divisions or **mirs** also had a second name which some said where synonyms of his **mir** name. Howitt notes that there was a distinction made between the totem names (**mir**) - sub-divisions - and the pseudo totems. Howitt explains it that while both are called **mir** the true totem owns the man while the pseudo totem is owned by the man.[71]

Now each **mir** or sub-division was associated with a specific compass direction. This direction was the direction in which the head of an individual was to be laid in his grave.[72]At death the individual was given a mortuary totem which was only applied to an individual after death. R.H.Mathews notes that these directions pointed to the spirit land mi-yur - a name signifying home or final resting place - of the respective clans.[73]

Mathews notes that these **mi-yur's** where the places the spirits of the dead would congregate after death. From these **mi-yur's** the spirits "... emerge and are born again in human shape when a favourable opportunity presents itself"[74]. According to Mathews each **mi-yur** had it's own

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[70] Howitt op.cit pp.59-64

[71] ibid,p.61

[72] ibid,p.62

[73] R.H.Mathews, op.cit, p.287

[74] ibid , p.293.

watering place and the **mi-yur's** where divided into the same divisions and clans as the people of the tribe ie the spirit of a **Krokitch** goes to a **Krokitch** **mi-yur**.[75]Blumer in 1887 likewise notes that the Aborigines of the Wimmera refereed to the **giapmeer** as the direction to which he belongs and the direction he is pointed in at death.[76] Mathews gives a bit more detail regarding the divisions than does Howitt. According to Mathews the primary divisions contained a number of clans - they where not as well defined as the sections - which themselves contained a number of totems.[77] Mathews found that a totem claimed by a clan in one locality was likewise claimed by a different clan in another locality.[78] The children take the primary division, clan and totem of it's mother. Now even though an individual claims some natural object or species as it's special totem "...all the totems of his fellow - clansmen are friends of his"[79].

Now as was shown above both Howitt and Mathews noted that these tribes divided creation up among the primary divisions. This categorisation of nature into totemic divisions could indicate that a similar life principle flowed through all the members of a division. This would mean that the totems (or in Mathews terms clans)belonging to say the **Krokitch** division had the same life

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[75] ibid, p.293

[76] Rev.J.Blumer , 1888, P.40

[77] i R.H.Mathews op.cit ,pp.286-289

[78] ibid, p.289

[79] ibid, p.291

principle flowing through them ; similarly the pseudo totems (in Mathews terms totems) belonging to the totems had the same life principle flowing through them.

Howitt notes that in all the tribes with the **Krokitch** and **Gamutch** division there was a belief in sex totems. According to Howitt the bat belonged to the men and the nightjar to the women. These totems where totems of a particular kind, they where called **yaur** or flesh or **ngirabul** or **mir** just as where the real totems. The only difference between these sex totems and the real totems was ".. that the bat was the brother of all the men while any one totem was the brother only of the men who bore it as their totem."[80]. " The wotjo said the bat was the man's brother and that the nightjar was his wife"[81]. According to Howitt the **Wotjoballuk** believed that if a bat was killed this would shorten the life of a man , similarly if a nightjar was killed this would shorten the life of a women.[82]

NGINTAIT LATJILATJI JARIJARI DADIDADI WADIWADI WEMBAWEMBA

Moiety, matrilineal clan, sex totemism

Very little is known about the tribes of the extreme North-West of Western Victoria. According to Mathews these tribes belonged to the Barkunjee nation which extended into New South

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[80] A.W.Howitt op.cit, p.57

[81] ibid, p.57

[82] ibid, p.58

Wales. These tribes where matrilineal in descent and where divided into two moiety divisions , the **Muckwarra** (hawk) and the **Keelpara** (crow); with **Muckwarra** being equivalent to the **Gamatch** and the **Keelpara** to the **Krolitch**. The **Mukwara** had a distinct selection of totems associated with it comprising animals and plants ,Mathews lists seventeen totems. The **Keelpara** likewise had totems, Mathews again lists seventeen totems.[83] Bulmer notes that " all persons of the same order considered themselves related: they where in fact brothers and sisters".[84] Likewise marriage toke place between member of opposite division and also different totems[85]Cameron notes that the **ta-ta-thi** (**Daidadi**) besides having ordinary totems also had what are now known as sex totems . The bat (**rakur**) was reverenced by the men and never killed it , on the other the women revered the small owl (**dhrail**). The **Wathi-wathi** (**WADIWADI**) called these animals respectively **benalongi** and **yeraliri**[86]. From these two example it could be assumed that the rest of the extreme North-Western tribes had similar sex totems. G.Krefft noted that for the **Barababaraba** the men believed that the bat was their brother and that killing one would result in the death of one of their lubras - this is obviously[87] incorrect since the orthodox tradition was that killing the women sex totem could result in death for a women not by the killing of a mans totem.

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[83] R.H.Mathews , 1898, p.243

[84] Rev.J.Bulmer op.cit, p.39

[85] ibid, p.39

[86] P.L.P.Cameron 1884, p.350

[87] G.Krefft, 1862-65, p.359-369

Cammeron also notes that like the **wergai** these tribes divided creation up among the members of the tribe[88]. Cameron though mentioning that these tribes believed the spirits of the dead visit the earth in the form of ghosts, he also notes that they believed in a future state of some kind[89].Beveridge on the other hand notes that they believed in reincarnation , "... since when they die they imagine that they become birds or beasts and inhabit the localities they used to frequent prior to death"[90]

RECONSTRUCTION ONE

It would appear from looking at the four matrilineal tribes in the Western Victoria that there was a fair degree of homogeneity in religious outlook within this area. It could be safely said that in this area there was a belief in sex, moiety and clan totemism as well as a belief in reincarnation.

In sex totemism the life of the totemite was related to the life of the totem , if the totem was killed so died a totemite. The bat seems to have been the some what universal male sex totem in the Western district, with the women's sex totem being either the nightjar , owl, e.t.c. Apart from the sectional system of the **Mara** nation the Western district was made up of tribes possessing two primary divisions and members of each division considered themselves and their totem to be of one flesh. In all of the Western district man and nature where classified between the divisions

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88 ibid, p.350

89ibid, pp.363-364

90 P.Beveridge , 1861, p.21

of the tribe. The moieties had matrilineal clan associated with them in which there was regarded a kinship between the totem and the totemites. If the Western part of Victoria is similar the matrilineal tradition in the rest of Australia, then it would appear that there was no cult totemism, associated with the matrilineal clans , nor where there spirit centres. What this means is there was no secret exclusive ceremonial activity dealing with the totem or totems. The occurence of reincarnation among the **Wergai** and the **Mara** indicates that this belief was universal through out the Western district.

The matrilineal tradition , of the Western district, indicates that the Aborigines of this area considered that there was a kinship between themselves and certain objects of nature - the totem. This kinship indicates that a mystical solidarity pervades the Aborigines consciousness. The classifying of man with nature, indicates that the Aborigines of the Western district where in an interconnected, intertwined, symbiotic relationship with nature. Totem and totemite shared the same life force, each where in a inter dependant reciprocal relationship . Even in dreams the totem communicated with the totemite , since to dream of ones totem in the North-West of Victoria means that someone has done something to it for the purpose of harming the sleeper or one of his totemites.

The distinction between man and aspects of nature becomes blurred, the difference between man and animal is only a surface distinction; since within the totem and the totemites flow the same life principle. The totemites are of the same flesh as the totem, the sub-totems share of this

flesh , the objects which belong to the primary division share of this flesh. There is a fusion between nature and man, both are merged into a unified, interconnected totality.

The Aborigine looked out upon nature and saw himself. Nature is not a meaningless array of objects, nature is pervaded with an emotional ambience - a feeling of belonging -; his totem is his friend, a companion , his totem is himself transformed , his fellow totemites are brothers and sisters ; as a consequence the Aborigine is never alone within nature, since he is part of it. The totemite is connected spiritually , and because of reincarnation, historically to all the species of the totem ; a connection which transcends space and time , it is not “this” bat or “that” nightjar, but all bats and all nightjars if these are the totemites totems. Any appearance of the totem in space or time - past present and future - is an image or echo of the totemites. The totemite is related both synchronically and diachronically through the totem to nature.

CENTRAL VICTORIA

***Patrilineal moiety, patrilineal clans totems ? sex totems, dream totemism* ?**

The information on Central Victorian totemism is mainly that which was obtained by A.W.Howitt. This information is meagre and does not make for any definite claims about pre-contact Victorian Aboriginal patrilineal clan totemism ie cultic totemism .

Central Victoria was made of the **Kulin** nation. This nation comprised the **Woiwurrung**, **Bunwurrung** ,**Wadawurrung**, **Jargurdwurrung**, **Daungwurrung** and the **Ngurail-lamwurrung**. The most detailed information dealing with the totemism of the **Kulin** tribes is the material collected by Howitt. This material deals with the **Woiwurrung** and in particular the **Urunjeri-baluk** (white gum people) clan ; as Howitt says "the **Urunjeri-baluk**... [is] the clan that my information particularly refers. Thus in trying to draw up the totemic beliefs of central Victoria, conclusions will be drawn based upon the beliefs of the **Woiwurrung** ie the **Urunjeri-baluk**.

Howitt notes that the Aborigines of the **Kulin** nation where patrilineal in descent and that the social organisation of these tribes was a two class system, **Bunjil** (eaglehawk) and **Waa** (crow)[91]. In other words the **Kulin** nation had patrilineal moiety totemism. These two divisions , **Bunjil** and **Waa**, where exogamous and married amongst themselves[92]. Within the **Kulin** nation because residency was patralocal there was distributed local totem clans, which where either **Waa** or **Bunjil**, the child of a **Bunjil** man and a **Waa** women was **Bunjil.** In certain localities all the men and children where **Waa** and the women **Bunjil** , in other areas the reverse was the case.[93]

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[91] A.W.Howitt op.cit, p.65

[92] ibid, p.65

[93] ibid, p.48

Howitt notes in one place that there was one totem attached to the **Waa** division (hawk)[94] and the **Bunjil** division had no totems, but in another place contradicts this by saying it was the **Bunjil** division which had the one totem (hawk) and the **Waa** had none. Now since Howitt in an earlier article maintains that the **Bunjil** division had the one totem (hawk) , it could be safely assumed that it was the **Bunjil** which had the one totem and the **Waa** division had none. In an 1882 article Howitt in talking about the ancestors of the **Kurnai** mentions that it seems probable that their ancestors where of totems of the **Waa** and **Bunjil** classes ; Howitt say the totem of the **Bunjil** class was the Emu - wren. Thus we have two probable totems of the **Bunjil** class Emu - wren and hawk.

Howitt argues that at the time of recording the information totemism in Central Victoria had died out. From looking at Aboriginal legends Howitt summarised that the sons of **Bunjil** where the totems of this division ie **Thara** (hawk), **Yukope** (musk lorikeet), **Jurt-jurt** (nankeenkestral), **Dantun** (blue mountain lorikeet) and **Turnung** (brush tailed phascogale). When it came to the totems of the **Waa** division there where no legends ,but more importantly Howitt’s informant, who was **Waa**, said he knew of no totems.

Now the claim by Howitt’s informant throws into doubt the presence of clan totems in this area , since it is highly unlikely that only one division had totems and the other did not. Also the

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[94] ibid, p.47

mythological data as shown in chapter five demonstrates that man was considered to have been made by the supreme being , this thus does not allow for the possibility of totemism ; since mythologically there is no evidence of man's kinship with objects of nature, as there is in the Western district. Now though there seems to be lack of evidence supporting the idea of clan totems, if we go back to the earlier commentators ie Parker and Thomas there appears the to be evidence of some form of totemism.

Parker writing in 1854 about the **Djadjawurrung** noted that " there were certain animal that no native would kill or eat when I first went among them. The crow and the bat [a sex totem] were thus particularly distinguished, and the belief avowed that the souls of their ancestors dwelt in them"[95]. Likewise W.Thomas writing before 1867 noted that among the **Bunwurrung** "the wombat(or warren)[like the koala] is also a scared animal, and must not be skinned. Many birds are also sacred; some may be eaten by the aged only others by the doctors only"

One indication of the presence of clan totems is the occurrence of a cultic life associated with the totems. The only mention of anything approaching cultic behaviour, is the occurrence of what at first appears to be an increase rite. Howitt notes that outside Berwick there are two stones which represent **Djurt-djurt** carrying **Thara**, " ...in old times before white men came(he was told) the blackfellows when they wanted to catch plenty of kangaroos, used to go to these two stones and taking a bough strip off the leaves and throw them down in front of Djurt Djurt and Thara then laying the twigs on the leaves".[96] This behaviour is not quite an increase rite, since **Djurt Djurt**

[95]Parker, 1962 (1854), p.26
[96]Howitt, 1975, p.23

and **Thara** are not kangaroos and to be an kangaroo increase rite the stones would have to belong to a kangaroo spirit centre.

If the situation is somewhat unclear as to the presence of clan totems , it is a different matter with regard to sex totemism. Howitt notes that with the **Wiowurrung** there were four sex totems "... the Emu Wren and the Bat for men and the small Nightjar and the Superb Warbler for women"[97]. Howitt makes the comment that these totem may be present in those tribes to which the **Wiowurrung** are members. Now as was seen from Parkers comments the bat was regarded as special among the **Djadjawurrung**, thus it could be concluded that the rest of the **Kulin** had sex totems; possibly the same ones as the **Wiowurrung**.

When it comes to dream totems the information is in fact contained to perhaps only one reference. Howitt in 1883 notes that to dream of a kangaroo among the **Wiowurrung** is to receive a warning of impending danger.[98] . Though this is not exactly dream totemism, from this reference it could be safely assumed that dream contact was held through out the **Kulin** nation.

RECONSTRUCTION TWO

It is fairly certain that the whole of Central Victoria possessed a patrilineal two class system comprising the **Bunjil** and **Waa** divisions. These classes where distributed through out the **Kulin** nation into patrilineal patrilocal clans. Now it is not certain whether these clans where only

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[97]Howiit 1888, p.57
[98]Howitt, 1883, p.195

localised aspect of a patrilineal social totemism ie moiety totemism , or whether they where elements in a clan totemism ie cultic totemism.

If they where localised aspects of a patrilineal social totemism , then we would expect this system to look a bit like Western Victoria ie 1) classifying and dividing nature up among the primary divisions, 2) prohibition on the killing of certain animals, 3) totems attached or belonging to the clans, 4) places to which the spirits of the dead went to on death, 5) a belief in reincarnation. 6) the idea that all members of the clan, thus division, where of the same 'flesh'.

From what we know about central Victoria there is no evidence to support point 1. The evidence of Parker and Thomas support point 2. The evidence of Howitt along with the demonstration of point 2 supports point 3. There is no evidence for point 4. From the available evidence ie Howitt e.t.c it is apparent that the **Kulin** did not believe in reincarnation since as Howitt and others shows they believed in a future state up in the sky. ,thus there is no evidence for point 5. There is no evidence to support point 6.

If the **Kulin** had a cultic totemism there should be present , if they where following the Australia wide tradition, the presence of a ceremonial cultic life ie there should be spirit - centres in the area. The evidence of Howitt regarding the ceremony at Berwick says that there no spirit centres. If there where spirit - centres , and thus a cultic totemism, the increase rite for a species should take place at the species spirit - centre ; now because in the case of Berwick the increase rite took

place at place not associated with the species this would indicate that there was no cultic totemism.

Thus because of the lack of evidence of spirit - centres it appears that Central Victoria only possessed a patrilineal social (moiety) totemism; a patrilineal social totemism made up of localised patrilocal clans possessing totems. Along side this patrilineal social totemism there was also a sex totemism comprising two animals per sex which where believed to be the brother or sister of the respective males and females. If this is the case then it would appear that Central Victoria possessed a variation of patrilineal social totemism slightly different from that of the Western district ie society was not classified with nature , no reincarnation e.t.c. The inconsistency between the possible presence of totemism and the lack of mythological data supporting totemism ie if the Gods made , man, animal and the earth then there dose not seem any way in which man can have a kinship with nature, could be accounted by the situation of an older belief system being superimposed upon by a newer belief system.

Parker's comments about the **Djadjawurrung** believing that the souls of their ancestors resided in the crow and the bat indicate that they ascribed a hidden meaning, to or, beneath mundane reality - this obviously applies to the rest of the **Kulin**. The beliefs of the **Djadjawurrung** and the beliefs about the sex totems indicates that **Kulin** had the same ideas regarding the kinship between certain animals and man.

GIPPSLAND

Gippsland was made up of the **Kurna**i nation and the **Bidewel**. The **kurnai** comprised the **Krauetungaiung**, **Brabralung**, **Bratauolung** ,**Tatungalung** and the **Braiakaulung.** The **Bidewel** occupied territory both in Victoria and New South Wales , this territory was like a no mans land and comprised Aborigines who where outcastes from other tribes ; but since very little is known about them they will be neglected..

KURNAI

sex totemism, individual totemism

The **Kurnai** inhabited Eastern Victoria and was divided into five tribal divisions. They had no totemic division but only recognized sex tptems.[99] There was neither patrilineal nor matrilineal descent , the boys followed their father and the girls followed their mother[100]. Though the **Kurnai** had special animals who where held in reverence, the **Muk-Kurnai**[101], apart from individual totemism they only had sex totems[102]. These sex totems where the emu wren and the superb warbler who belonged respectively to the men and the women [103]these totems in fact divided the **Kurnai** up into two sex groups. The emu wren was the brother of the men and the superb warbler was the sister of the women[104]. The men's totem was evoked over the boy novices at the **Kurnai** initiation ceremony[105] to give them infuse into the manly virtues[106]. Howitt say these sex totems remained in force well after the

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[99]Howitt, 1975, p.22
[100] Howitt, 1882, p.45
[101]Howitt, 1975. p.21-22
[102]ibid, p.22
[103]Howitt, 1886, p.416
[104]ibid, p.416
[105]Howitt, 1888,.p,53
[106]ibid, p.57

other totems became extinct.[107] The kangaroo used to warn the Kurnai of impeding danger through dreams[108] this is a bit like what would be expected from the belief in dream totemism; but as the kangaroo is not an individuals dream totem then it does not fit the criteria for dream totemism. The nightjars are also supposed to warn the Kurnai of enemies being about by making the noise borun-borun. Howitt notes that another bird likewise warned them but he could not remember it's name.[109]

Howitt notes that the Muk-Kurnai where different from totems. It was quite aright to eat these animals, their flesh being called Muk-jaik or excellent meat, whereas the flesh of animals was called just jaik or flesh[110]. Now though they where not totems they nevertheless had attributes similarly to the totems. The porpoise was thought to be the guardian of the Jeraeil ceremonies. The robin and the black duck were guardians of he novices at the Jeraeil. The bull frog was not killed because it thought that great rains would come. The cormorant was considered a very sagacious bird.[111] Now it must be emphasised that the whole species to which the animal belonged was considered to have the same attributes.

There does not appear to be a belief in reincarnation among the Kurnai. The Kurnai believed the human possesses two spirits the Yambo and the Mrart . The Yambo could leave the body in sleep and confer with other disembodied spirits. The Mrart on the other hand left the body at

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[107]ibid, p.59
[108]Howitt, 1883, p.195
[109]Howitt, 1887, p.46
[110]Howitt, 1975, p.22
[111]ibid, p.22

death and went up into the sky. The Mrart could return to earth where it fed upon plants, also it communicated with wizards at will upon being summoned.[112]

RECONSTRUCTION THREE

The only thing that can be said with surety about the Kurnai is that they had individual and sex totemism. I fHowitt is right about the Kurnai once having a totemism then it is quite probable that the Muk-Kurnai would have been these totems.

Irrespective of this possibility the Kurnai had a consciousness similar to that of the Western and Central Victorian Aborigines. The presence of sex totems, animals in dreams and the attributes of the Muk-Kurnai indicate that the Kurnai like the rest of Victoria had a mystical solidarity with nature. Through this solidarity the Kurnai have a deeper level of meaning about their environment. The Kurnai have a personal relationship with objects of nature certain animals are their friends, or guardians. Kurnai sex totems and the Muk-Kurnai are not bound by space and time, they in fact transcend these. The whole species to which the sex totem or Muk-Kurnai belongs participates in the attributes of the individual member, the whole represents the individual and the individual is the whole. If the Kurnai where like the rest of Victoria then they would have had a kinship with their sex totems. All the emu and all the men where bothers, all the super warblers and all the women where sisters. this kinship with each other and the species connected the Kurnai into an interconnected web of personal relationships, both in society and

[112]Howitt, 1883, .187

nature. Society and nature became a unified interconnected totality of mystical SIGNIFICANCE’S.

SUMMARY

From the above it can be seen that Victoria was divide into five different and distinct totemic groups. The common theme among these group was the possession of sex totems. In central Victoria there was an anomalous four species combination, the where the wren, bat, nightjar and super warbler. In the Western district it appears the sex totems where the bat and the nightjar. In Gipsland they where the emu wren and the super warbler. Throughout Victoria totemic consciousness pervaded the Aborigines outlook, pervaded it to such a degree that the Aborigines where enveloped in a mystical atmosphere of meanings and significance’s.

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CHAPTER FOUR

GODS, DEMAS, AND NUMINA OF THE PRE-CONTACT VICTORIAN ABORIGINES

"I have the sense of a presence, strong, and at the same time soothing, which hovers over me."[1]

GODS AND DEMAS

Though it is generally accepted that the Aborigines had a religion , some commentators deny the presence of Gods within Aboriginal religion. E.A.Worms in his book Australian Aboriginal Religions makes the point that " neither known writings about the Aborigines nor our own lengthy observations , nor those of W.E.H.Stanner and T.G.H.Strehlow allow us to suppose that the Australians believed in a god and in particular a 'high god.'"[2] Worms seems to mean by a god a being which is a creator; since in talking about the higher being in Australia he claims that " these beings are creators only to a very limited degree since they merely finish of a pre-existing world... "[3]. As a result of this characterization of Australian Aboriginal high beings Worms adopts the word 'dema' to refer to the Australian Aboriginal high beings who where not creators, but instead finished of a pre-existing world.

This characterization of a God as a creator by Worms is a bit arbitrary and excludes a great many beings which are considered Gods. The high God of the Greeks Zeus was not a creator - he was born into a pre-existing world -, neither was Dionysus, or Apollo. The Indian God Ganesa, the Asvins and the Goddess Laksmi e.t.c where not creators. The problem of defining what is a God and what is not a God is met with the same difficulties as we saw is encountered with defining religion. A definition can be narrow or wide such

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[1]W.James The Varieties Of Religious Experience, Penquin ,1982, p.722
[2]E.A.Worms Australian Aboriginal Religions Translated by M.J.Willson,D.O.Donovan, M.Charlesworth, Nelen Missiological unit 1986, p.106

[3]ibid , p.106

that it includes a large number of phenomena, or it can be exclusive such that it only includes only a very limited number of phenomena.

Thus the ascertaining of whether the Victorian Aborigines believed in Gods is a matter of what definition is used , if we adopt Worms criteria then it can be said that some Victorian Aborigines believed in a God. Though Worm's schema of demas and Gods is arbitary it is nevertheless useful in the case of Victoria, since there are in fact two distinct and different types of supreme beings to be found in Aboriginal Victoria, Gods and Dema. It should be pointed out that while there are two differnt names are used for the supreme beings in Victoria, Dema are a special type of God.

CENTRAL VICTORIA

The characterization of the Australian Aboriginal high beings as non creators or 'dema' is adequate for most of Australia and some parts of Victoria, but is incorrect for other parts of Victoria ; where the high beings where gods i.e creators. The area which had a belief in a God was the central part of Victoria inhabited by the **Kulin**. In this area there are only four recorded tribal names for their God ie **Woiwurrung**, **Bunwurrung**, **Djadjawurrung** - possibly here the supreme being was not a God but instead a Demas - **Wadawurrung**.

BUNWURRUNG

W.Thomas records that the God of the Western Port Aboriginies [**Bunwurrung**] was called **Punjil**. **Punjil** made the earth ,trees, animals and man. **Punjil** had a wife called **Boi**

Boi and a brother called **Pallian**[4]. According to Thomas the Melbourne Aborigines believed that **Punjil** and **Pallian** made from clay two men and two women.

Punjil used a large knife to cut two pieces of bark into which he mixed up a lot of clay. From this clay **Punjil** made two black men one very black and the other not so black.**Punjil** first made the feet then the legs then finaly the head. On the man he called **Kookinberro** he placed curly hair and on the man he called **Berrookoorn** he placed straight .hair. **Punjil** was pleased with his creation and danced aroun the two men , then he lay on each ome and blew into their nostruls , mouth and navel to make thenm move; then he showed them to his brother **Pallian**[5].

The similarly between this creation account and the Christian account would throw doubt upon the traditionality of the Aboriginal account as it could be assumed that it resulted from contact with missionaries. This is not correct since Blumer recounting an Aboriginal myth similar to that of the dove of Noah's arch notes " the blackfellow who told me the story was by no means sharp I could not give him credit for inventing such a story I believe it to be a genuine tradition of their own"[6].

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[4] W.Thomas 'Brief Account of the Aborigines of Australia felix', in T.F.Brides ed Letters from Victorian pioneers, Heineman ,1969, p.421

[5]ibid p.422

[6]R.B.Smyth The Aborigines of Victoria, John Curry , O'niel, Vol.1 1972, p.428

The day after **Punjil** made the two men **Pallian** made two women. While paddling in a creak the water became muddy in which case **Pallian** could hardly move. He plucked a small branch from a tree and while looking through it said "name you". **Pallian** beat harder and hence forth he saw near him two hands then two heads then two breasts the two complete human figures whence he called out "like my brother Punjil me make two Bagrooks. **Pallian** beat again and two women came above the water and fell on the ground ; he called his brother **Punjil** who breathed into their nostrils, mouth, and navel **Punjil** then called them **Kunewarra** and **Kuurrook**[7].

WOIWURRUNG

Smyth records that the Yarra river tribe [**Woiwurrung** believed in a God called **Bunjil**. **Bunjil** made the earth [**Beek-** **narreen** and everything else . **Bunjil** had two wives of which he gave one to his brothers **Boo-err-go-en**. **Bunjil** also had two sons **Ta-jerr** and **Tarrn-nin**. Like the **Punjil** of the **Bunwurrung** **Bunjil** had a knife **Warra-goop** and unlike the **Bunwurrung** and instrument called **Ber-rang** with which he could open everything.[8]

Howitt gives an account of **Bunjil** , possibly of the **Urunjeribalak** clan, which is different to that of Smyth. According to Howitt the **Woiwurrung** believed **Bunjil** had five sons .The **Woiwurrung** where reluctant to mention the name of **Bunjil**,- Howitt surmises that

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[7]W.Thomas op.cit, p.422-423

[8]R.B.Smyth op.cit, p.423

this is to avoid offending an unseen power - .outside of folklore accounts; this would seem to indicate that there was some form of reverence towards **Bunjil**. **Bunjil** went up into the sky where he is the star Fomalhaut and according to the **Woiwurrung** he looks down upon the earth to watch everything the **Woiwurring** do. According to William Beiruk, Howitts informant, the **Woiwurung** called **Bunjil** ,**Mamingata** before the white man came to Melbourne.[9]

DJADJAWURRUNG

There seems to be some confusion in regard to the beliefs about a supreme being of the **Djadjawurrung**. This could be accounted for by the observation of Parker that the tradition vary with different localities. According to Parker the **Djadjawurrung** did not believe in a creator or preserver of all things , they nevertheless called their supreme being **Binbeal**. This does not seem right and might be a mistake for **Bunjil**, as **Binbeal** was considered to be the son of **Punjil** of the **Bunwurrung**[10] and was the rainbow11[11] he was also the rainbow for the **Wadawurrung**.[12]. **Binbeal** is was believed subjected the dead to some form of trial the good being given good land , the bad driven away instead. Parker goes on to say that in another tradition there was a supreme being called **Pundyil** or **Boondyil** who cut up a kangaroo into many pieces to stock the world with other

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[9]A .W Howitt, ' On some Australian Beliefs', J.A.I, Vol.13, 1883, p.193

[10]R.B.Smyth op.cit,p.423

[11]W.Thomas op.cit,p.425

[12]J.Cary 'Vocabularies of the Geelong and Colac tribes', A.A.A.S.,Vol.7, p.860

kangaroos.**Boondyil** is now in the sky where he is the planet Jupiter[13]; this is a lot like the **Woiwurrungs** account. This account of Parker could indicate that unlike the **Bunwurrung** and the **Woiwurrung** the **Djadjawurrung's** supreme being was more like a Demas than a God.

Parker makes note of one account that may indicate that there was a sense of worship towards the supreme being of the **Djadjawurrung** Parker records that to appease the anger of the being **Mindi** the **Djadjawurrung** performed certain actions in front of a carved representation of two figure in a tree as Parker says they would "touch it reverently with a wand"[14] Massola is of the belief that the carved figure where in fact **Bunjil** and his wifes and that the action was a form of worship[15]

WADAWURRUNG

The only recorded evidence about the supreme being of the **Wadawurrung** is the name. Gary in 1898 published a an Aboriginal vocabulary collected in 1840. In this vocabulary Cary notes that the creator of the **Wadawurrung** was called **Kar- gnal- a bil**[16] .Cary also

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[13]E.S.Parker 'Aborigines of Australia', in E.Morrisons rd Frontier life in the Lodden protectorate Daylford, 1967, p.24

[14] ibid,p.25

[15]A.Massola 'Probable Native Stone Arrangment at Franklinford', Vic.Nat.Vol.85, 1968, p.37

[16] J.J.Cary op.cit, p.861

translates certain sentences where he gives the name **Detable** **Moroponuk** as the Aboriginal equivalent for 'great spirit [17]'. Apart from these names there is no other material dealing with the supreme being of the **Wadawurrung**. Nevertheless it would appear that he **Wadawurrung** might have had similar beliefs to the **Bunwurrung**, since like the **Bunwurrung** the **Wadawurrung** called the rainbow **Brin-ba-al** [**Binbeal**].[18] Even apart from shared words it is not possible to know whether the supreme being of the **Wadawurrung** was like that for the **Bunwurrung** and the **Woiwurrung** i.e a God , or was perhaps like the **Djadjawurrung** a Demas.

RECONSTRUCTION ONE

It would appear from the writings of Howitt and Thomas that it could be said with certainty that the **Bunwurrung** and **Woiwurrung** believed in a creator God - a being who created man, animals, and the earth. From the reports of Parker it would appear that the **Djadjawurrung** believed in a Demas - a being who only finished off a pre-existing world; but since there seems to be some confusion in Parkers accounts i.e the **Djadjawuurung** use the same names as the **Woiwurrung** and **Bunwurrung**, it could be that their supreme being was a creator God. This seems more appropriate since the **Kulin** formed a nation

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[17] ibid, p.864

[18]ibid, p.860

and it should then follow that they shared the same general beliefs. If this is correct then it would also follow that the supreme being of the **Wadawurrung** was also a God.

The writings of Parker and Howitt indicate that a special attitude was held with regard to the God. Parker notes what appears to be a form of worship ,or prayer and Howitt records a reverential attitude to wards the **Woiwurrung** God. Now though the information is scanty for the rest of the **Kulin** it could be asserted that worship and reverence was common through out the **Kulin** nation.

What could account for the lack of a definite God for the Djadjawurrung is the idea that Parker was only dealing with a local account . Parker on this point does say that the accounts did vary from locality; this bring up an important point for the rest of the Kulin. Howitt and Smyth's differring accouts regarding unjil's children could indicate that within a tribe the accounts differed with regard to the God. This conclusion then gives us the same picture as the dreamtime acconts , namely that the ideas relating to the God varied within a tribe and between tribes.

WESTERN VICTORIA

If it could be said with a fair degree of cetainty that the Central district of Victoria believed in a God; then it is equaly certain that the extreme North of the Western district in the main believed in a Demas. Though this may be the case for the Northern part of the Western district the situation for the South of the Western district is not very certain.

DHAUWURDWURRUNG

Dawson notes that the **Kuurn kopan noot** tribe of the **Dhauwurdwurrung** believed in a supreme being called **Pirnmeheel**. **Pirnmeheel** was a good spirit being a gigantic man that lived above the clouds. He was kind and harmed no one. Though he is seldom mentioned, when the name **Pirnmeheel** is mentioned it is always with respect.**Pirnmeheel** voice is the thunder and this voice is listened to with pleasure since it makes the grass and roots grow and brings rain[19]. This is all the information that Dawson gives thus it is impossible to know whether **Pirnmeheel** was a creator of the world, man and animals, or whether he only finished of the already pre- existing world.

Dawson also gives the name of the supreme being of the **Peek whuurong** tribe [Port fairy] of the **Dhauwurdwurrung**. This tribe called their supreme being **Peep ghnatnaen**[20]. Dawson gives no other information regarding this being ; but since both the **Peep ghnatnaen** and the **Kuurn kopan noot** belonged to the same language group it could be assumed that both beings had the same attributes.

DJABWURRUNG

The only information about this language group is for the **Chaap wuurong** tribe. This tribe called their supreme being **Mam yungrakk**[21] and this is the only information we have . Now seeing this tribe belonged to the same nation as the above two mentioned tribes it could follow that they all had the same types of ideas regarding their supreme

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[19]J.Dawson Australian Aborigines , George Robertson, 1881, p.49

[20] ibid, p.xv1

[21]ibid, p.xv1

being; but as to what these ideas where it is impossible to tell. Thus whether the South of the Western district believed in a God or Demas it is not possible to tell.

WERGAI

There are two conflicting accounts regarding the **Wergai** beliefs about their supreme being. Stanbridge notes that the **Boorong** tribe of the **Wergai** believed the earth was already in existence when **Pupperimbal** , who was one of the race called **Nurrumbung-uttias** who inhabited the land in the beginning, made the sun[22]. This account of Stanbridge indicates that **Pupperimbal** and the **Nurrumbung-uttias** where Demas. On the other hand Howitt notes the **Wotjobaluk** [**Wergai]** believed that the earth and all upon it was made by **Bunjil** or **Mani -Ngorak**[23]. Thus **Bunjil** is a creator hence a God

The descrepency in these two accounts could be accounted for by the observation that the **Boorong** lived very close to the borders of the **Wadiwadi** and **Wembawemba** who as we shall see believed in a Demas. Thus it could be assumed , to fit Standbridge's account ,that the **Boorong** adopted the Demas beliefs from these two tribes.

WEMBAWEMBA

Beveridge notes that the **Wembawemba** believed in a good spirit called **Gnawaderoot**. **Gnawaderoot** was already in existence when the earth was covered in darkness. This being caused the earth to be covered in light. Not much is said about **Gnawaderoot** but it appears from Beveridge's account that he was a Demas.

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[22]W.E.Stanbridge Some particulars of the general characteristices of astronomy and mythology of the tribes of the central part of Victoria southern Australia', Ethnological Society of London (n.s) Vol.1 ,1861, p.301

WADIWADI, JARIJARI, LADJILADJI, WAIKIWAIKI ?

There are two slightly different accounts regarding the beliefs of these tribes. Beveridge notes that these tribes believed that the earth was already in existence and inhabited by animals, when the good spirit **Ngondenont** caused the earth to be lit up by light.[24] Cameron on the other hand notes that the **Wathi-Wathi** [**Wadiwadi** believed in a being called **Tha-tha-puli** and the **Ta-ta-thi** [**Daidadi**] belived in a being called **Tulong**. According to Cameron these beings made man , women and dogs ; but he does not mention whether he created the world.[25] This is the only information we have on these tribes, but because R.H.Mathews notes that these tribes belonged to the **Barkunjee**[26] nation it would seem to follow that they shared the same general beliefs. It would appear that for these tribes the supreme being was a Demas.

RECONSTRUCTION TWO

The overall picture of the Western district seems to follow that of the Central district namely that different localities within a language group had different variations and

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[23] A.W.Howitt, The Native Tribes of Soutb -East Australia, Aboriginal Studies Press, 1996 pp.489-490

[24] P.Beveridge 'Of the Aborigines inhabiting the Great Lacustrine and REverine depression of the Lower Murray, Lower Murrumbidgee, Lower Lachlan and ;ower Darling', Jour. Procc of the Roy Soc. of N.S.W., Vol.17, 1883, p.60-61

[25] A.L.P.Cameron 'Notes on the tribes of New South Wales' J.A.I.,Volx1v, 1884, p.364

different language groups had different traditions. The picture that emerges is that the North of the Western district seems to have had a belief in a demas; while the central part of the Western district believed in a creator God. The information on the South of the Western district is inconclusive. There is no information on the attitudes the Aborigines had towards their supreme beings . And apart from the supreme beings of the South of the Western district, the supreme beings of the North seem to play no part in the life of the Aborigines. This could be due the idea that these being where so distant from the Aborigines that they ceased to occupy the minds of the Aborigines.

GIPPSLAND

The material dealing with the Western district is in some cases indecisive as to whether the supreme beings were Gods or Demas. The situation is entirely different for the **Kurnai** of Gippsland. In the caes of the **Kurnai** it is fairly certain that their supreme being was a demas.

Howitt the main commentator on the **Kurnai** gives two differing accounts regarding the beliefs of the supreme being. Now though they differ they both still in effect support the view that they believed in a Demas. In one account Howitt notes that the **Kurnai** believed in a being called **Mangan- ngaur** This being lived upon the already existing earth and

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[26]R.H.Mathews The Group Divisions and Intiation Ceromonies of the Barkunjee Tribes, Jou. Proc. Roy. Soc. of N.S.W. Vol.xxx1, 1898, pp.241-

taught the existing **Kurnai** their **Jeraeil**, the art of making weapons, canoes, e.t.c.[27]. In a another account Howitt notes that the earth was originally inhabited by beings who were the prototype of the present **Kurnai**. These beings perfected the unformed entities, which then existed , into the humans of the present.[28]

Consequently it appears fairly certain that the **Kurnai** believed in a Demas. When it comes to the attitude the **Kurnai** adopted to wards the Demas there, is no availible information. Perhaps like some of the beings of the Western district, the Demas was so distant from the Aborigines that they did not concern themselves with him.

YAITMATHANG

The information on the supreme being of the **Yaitmathang** is solely restricted to it's name. Howitt notes that **Tharamulun** was the name of the **Yaitmathang's** supreme being. It is thus impossible to know whether this being was a God or Demas. The **Yaitmathang's** attitude to this being is not known ; but when Howitt talks of the **Tharamulun** of the **Wolgal** and **Ngarego** he seems to imply that the **Yaitmathang** had the same attitude. If this is so then it appears that the **Yaitmathang** regarded **Tharamulun's** name as sacred

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[27]A.W.Howitt 'The Jeraeil or Initiation Ceromonies of the Kurnai Tribe' J.A.I .Vol.x111, 1884, p.313-314

[28]A.W.Howitt in J.G.Frazers ed The Native Races of Australasia, Percy, Lund,Humpheries, co ltd, 1975, p.21-22

and they only spoke his name in whispers. Sometimes the would avoid using the name completely and refer to him as 'He' or 'Him'[29]

RECONSTRUCTION THREE

It appears that through out Victoria there was a belief in either a God or Demas . It is fairly certain that the **Kurnai** believed in a Demas like thoughs tribes of the **Barkunjee** nation of North Western Victoria. The belief of a God seems to be restricted to the **Kulin** nation and the **Wergai** of the Western district. With the exception of the South of the Western district and sections of the **Kulin** the supreme beings where to distant from the Aborigines that they played no part in the lives of them. In the case of the **Kulin** and the South of the Western district , and perhaps the **Yaitmathang** there seems to have been a reverential attitude towards the supreme being. It interesting to speculate that where the supreme being was a God then we find and attitude of reverence.

NUMINA

Numina is a Roman term signifying spirits. These spirits where not considered in any personal way like the Gods where. The numina where associated with particular places

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[29] A/W/Howitt 'On Some Australian Beliefs' J.A.I,Vol.13, 1883, p.193

which had a sacred or mysterious character. The numina occupied rivers, streams, groves, thickets e.t.c. From the numina emanated good or bad influences.

AUSTRALIA

In Aboriginal Australia there was a multiplicity of numina. The numina permeated the Aborigines whole milieu; there number was so numerous that it would take an whole essay to delineate them. **Djalor** was a **Njol Njol** ghost who inhabited a particular local and who's temples where covered in maggots[30] The **Walbiri** had such numina as the **Gugulba** a dog like being with long teeth, the malevolent and malicious **Djanba** and the spiritstealers the **Guruwalba**[31] Some numina where at certain times dangerous to novices, others where at any time dangerous to every one. The night and the day equally held their malevolent and lethal spirits. Spirits which threatened the life, or wellbeing of the Aborigines hovered around and permeated the same shared world.

VICTORIA

Victoria was inhabited by a plethora of malevolent spirits, mischievous goblin types, nefarious creatures , fabulous animals, disembodied souls and spirits of omnipotent power.

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[30] E.A.Worms. 'Djamnar the Creator', Anthropos, Vol.xlv, 1950, p.650

[31] M.Meggitt ' Djanba among the Walbiri, Central Australia'. Anthropos Vol.50, 1955, pp.382-=384, 397- 399

These entities dwelt in holes in rocks, on mountain tops, lakes, the dark recesses of forests , graves , some roamed during day, others populated the night milieu. The aborigine of Victoria was continually aware of the presence of entities around him. These entities shared the world with him and where the cause of some of his misfortunes. The continual pervading presence of unseen forces was always upon the Aborigines mind, since they gave meaning to his lifes trails and tribulations.

The forces where indiscriminate in their machinations. In most cases these forces frightened the Aborigine , they where of horror , they made his heart beat faster , limbs shudder and his soul qivver. He was wary of them , he was unsure of them . The night milieu was a time of worry, it was permeated by a frightful atmosphere; an eeriness. The night was a time of uncertainty , the night was a time of possible terror[32]. These forces where not mere rationalizations, the apparitions where real, alive ; they penetrated right to the Aborigines marrow , they made him quake to the core of his being.

KULIN

The information regarding the **Kulin** tribes is fairly sketchy. Thomas notes that they "... [had] an idea of several imagimary beings, all of the dreaded class..."[33] The most detailed information is that for the **Woiwurrung**. From this information it could be assumed that the rest of the **Kulin** had similar belief.Now though there may have been local and idiosyncratic beliefs there where at least three belifes which appear to be common to a large proportion of the **Kulin**

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[32] R.B.Smyth The Aborigines of Australia Vol.1, J.Curry, O'Neil, 1972, p.xv111

The **KULIN** believed in a creature called **Krum-ku-dart- boniet** . This creature captured the Aborigine while he was asleep.**Ngarangs** were creatures with long hair beards and long hairy arms. These creatures lived in the roots of trees and went out a night to capture Aborigines, whom they would eat.**Tambora's** where headless female creatures They lived in dark caves and went out at night to capture sleeping Aborigines. **Turongs** and **Potkoorks** were mischievous spirits the former lived in the bush and the latter lived in water courses[34].

BUNYIP

The early settlers in Victoria heard from time to time of a dreaded and voracious creature. . This creature was the **Bunyip**[35]. This ubiquitous creature was generally shown as resemberling no known animal. It had a head and ears with a large body covered with feathers or fur.It could be heard bellowing and groaning when a tribe was camped by a lagoon. It came quickly upon the Aborigine it intended to kill and eat.. As Smyth recordes "... the noises it made terrified them very much" The **Bunwurrung** called the **Bunyip Toor- roo-dun**[36] The Goulburn Aborigines i.e the **Daungwurrung** and or the **Nguraiillamwurrung** believed that instead of eating you the **Bunyip** embraced you until

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[33]W.Thomas op.cit, p.402
[34]A.Massola Bunjils Cave ,Lansdown press, 1968, p.154

[35]R.B.Smyth op.cit, p.435

[36]ibid, p.235

you died.[37] Smyth notes that the ideas of the **Bunyip** appear on the Murray river and along the coast and swamp lands of the Western district[38]

Massola notes that at Challicum in the territory of the **Djabwurrung** there was a ground drawing of the **Bunyip.**[39] Buckely recordes that a tribe of the **Woiwurrung** believed in the **Bunyip** and thought it lived in lake Moodewarri[40]. According to Buckley the **Bunyip** was considered to be a supernatural creature.[41] Stanbridge recordes that the **Boorong** tribe of the **Wergai** believed that the **Bunyi**p inhabited deep holes.[42]

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[37]ibid, p.436

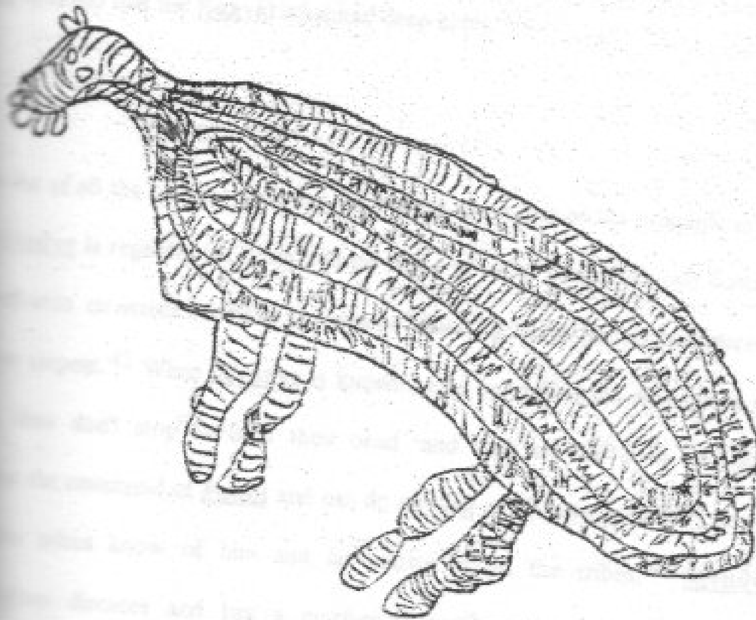
[38] ibid, p.436

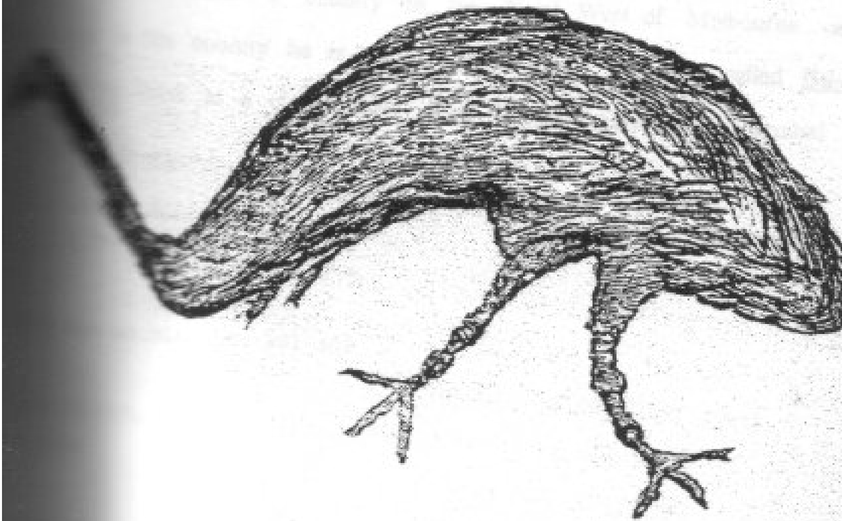
[39] A.Massola, 'The Challicum Bun-yip', Vic.Nat, Vol.74, 1957, pp76-83

[40]W.Buckely The Life And Adventures of William Buckely J.Morgan, Heinemann 1967, p.33

[41]Ibid, p.34

[42] Standbridge op.cit, pp. 301-302





...Century Victorian Aborigines of the Bunyip. Top picture from the Murray River ... Bottom picture from the Western Port Aborigine *Kurruk* (R. B. Smyth, "...Aborigines of Victoria", John Ferries, London, 1878, Vol. 1, P. 436, 437)

FIG 2

MYNDIE

Thomas notes the of all the beings which the Aborigines are in fear of the principle one is **Myndye.**[43] **Myndye** is regarded as being a large snake of great size which can contract itself into a small area or extent itself like a telescope[44] and Radcliffe-Brown considered it to be a rainbow serpent.[45] When **Myndye** is known to be around all the Aborigines run for their lives, they don't stop to bury their dead and they set the bush on fire.[46] **Myndye** is under the command of **Punjil** and can do nothing of his own accord[47]. Smyth notes that all the tribes know of him and he knows of all the tribes.[48] **Myndye** gives the Aborigines diseases and has a number of small creatures helping him[49]. **Myndye** is ment to inhabit a country in the North West of Melbourne called **Lillgoner** and in this country he is said to reside on a mountain called **Bu-ker Bun-nel** and to drink at a creak named **Neel Kunun.**[50] The ground around the place where he lives is very hard and no rain can penetrate it . The earth is covered with hard small and white substances and no wood except **Mullin** grows there.

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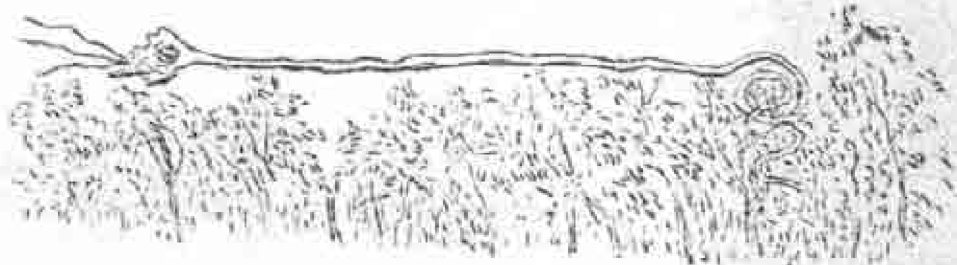
[43]W.Thomas op.cit, p.425
[44]ibid, p.425

[45]A.R.Radcliffe-brown, 'The Rainbow Serpent Myth in South- East Australia', Oceania., Vol.1 no.3, 1931, p.346
[46]W. Thomas, OP.CIT, P.426

[47]R.B.Smyth , op.cit, p.444

[48]ibid, p.444
[49] ibid, p.445

[50] ibid, p.445



Myndie (the Victorian Aborigines equivilent of the Rainbow Serpent) as drawn by Victorian Aboriginie
(R.B.Smyth The Aborigines of Victoria, John Curry, O'Neil, 1972, Vol. 1, pp. 446)

Any one who comes close to this country is either killed or given a disease. The only Aborigines who can enter this country is a family called **Munnie Brumbrum** . It is considered that only this family can arrest the power of **Myndye** by the wave of a hand or the movement of a finger.[51] Smyth notes that what the **Bunyip** was to the coast of the Western district **Myndye** was to the North western district.[52] Standbridge notes that the **Wergai** thought **Myndye** made the Murray river and to be about eighteen feet long.[53] Praker recordes that the **Djadjawurrung** were afraid of **Myndye**[54].

Thus it seems that the **Bunyip** and the **Myndye** where quite ubiquitous, From the above it would appear that these creatures where believed in over a large proportion of the central and North Western district of Victoria. On the other hand the being Loan was mainly a **Kulin** belief.

LOAN

Loan was a creature which inhabited Wilsons Promontory. The **Bunwurrung Woiwurrung** and the **Wadawuruung** used to visit this places for what appears to be

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[51] ibid, P.445

[52]ibid, p.437

[53] Standbridge op.cit, p.302

[54] E.S.Parker op.cit, p.24-25

religious reasons.[55] .If any ventured to this place without **Loans** permission they where killed.

Woiwurrung

According to the Thomas the **Woiwurrung** believed that they are attacked by evil spirits who inflict injuries and disease by thrusting small pieces of wood or twigs into the eyes or ears.[56] A being called **Krum-ku-dart** **Bineit** was an evil spirit which took possession of the bodies of old and wise men. There is considered to be an animal living on a mountain called **Narn** North east of Western port called **Wi-** **non-der-rer**.[57] This creature is supposed to kill the Aborigines who go into it's domain. The spirits- **Len-ba-moor**- of deceased doctors are supposed to instruct the doctors as to how to kill an alien Aborigine.[58] After death the human spirit called **Murup** is believed to wander it's old hunting ground. These spirits where thought to be drawn to the fires that the Aborigines lit at night.[59]

BUNWURRUNG

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[55]R.B.Smyth op.cit, p.454-455

[56]Thomas in R.B.Smyths ed The Aborigines of Australia, Vol1 J.Curry, O'Neil, 1972, p.465

[57]ibid, p.455-456

[58]ibid, p.463

[59]A.W.Howitt 'On Some Australian Beliefs; J.A.I.,Vol.13, 1883, p.188-189

In a country called **Marr-ne-beek** there was a spirit called **Loo-errn**. **Loo-errn** had his home at **Wamoon** [Wisons Promontory]. To some **Loo-errn** was an evil spirit and for others he was a good spirit. If any entered his land, who did not belong to it, without asking his permission he died.[60]

WADAWURRUNG

The **Wadawurrung** belived there was a creature called **Moo-roo-bul** who lived in a deep water hole in the river of that name. This creature would drag and kill any one who came near it's lair Another creature like **Moo-roo-bul** was **Too-roo-dun**. This creature lived at the mouth of Stawell's creak near the township of Tooradin.[61]

DJABWURRUNG

G.Robinson in 1841 notes that the Aboriginal tribes around the mountains near Burrunbeep station - near Mt.William - i.e the **Neet-she**, **Wat-ten-ne**, **Tone- did-jerer**, **Poit**, **Teerel**, **Entoul**, **Yam-ne-borer**, **Barconedeet**, **Galgal**, **Pelerwin**, **Borun**, **Pobiberite**, **Currac**, **Ponegaer**, **Torn**, **Pubbardeen**, **Caringum**, **Beeripmo**, **Boolucberrer** and others believed in two imaginary evil spirit-beings one male the other female called **Orokeet**. Robinson notes that these spirits where held in dread by these tribes. [62] It is these beings who are pictured on the front cover of this book

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[60]Smyth op.cit, p.453

[61]A.Massola 'Bunjil's Cave Landsdown press , 1968, p.154

[62] G.A.Robinson 'Report Of An Expedition...' in A.S.Kenyon ed The Aboriginal Protectorate of Port Phillip, Vic.His.Mag Vol.12, no.3, 1928, p.159. Massola notes that it is this creature that is pictured at the ‘Cave of the Serpent’ (A. Massola ‘A Reinterpretation of the Cave of the Serpent, Victorian Naturalist, Vol.74, 1957, p.68.)

KURNAI

It appears from the available information that the Gippsland Aborigines did not have a belief in the **Bunyip** or **Myndye**; though it appears that they shared a belief in **Loan** and had similar ideas in regard to Wilsons Promontory[63] . Though the information is slight it is fairly certain that they believed in at least four types of numina.

KRAUETUNGAIUNG

The Aborigines of the Mitchell river and lakes of North Gippsland , the **Krauetungaiung**, believed in three types of spiritual beings: the **Bonkan**, the **Brenin** and the **Bullundoot**. The **Bonkan** is a beneficent spirit and is called upon to alleviate the malicious effects induced by **Brenin**.**Brenin** is considered to be a malignant spirit and inflicts upon the Aborigines various disorders such as a chest affection called **Toon-dung** and violent pains in the stomachs. The later dissorder is thought to be induced by the thrusting down the mouth the hooked end of the throwing stick called **Murranun**.**Brenin** is associated with the being called **Bullundoot** the term **Bullun** is used to describe these beings and means 'dual existence'. These two beings are thought to live in the clouds.[64]

Besides the belief in these three numina there is also a belief in the **Mrarts**. The **Mrarts** are the spirits of dead Aborigines . Some are not dangerous though others are. The evil **Mrarts** wander around at night carrying a net bag into which they put children . They

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[63]A.W.Howitt 'On the Migration of the Kurnai Ancestors' J.A.I.VOL.15, 1886, P.417

frighten , injure and eat the Aborigines. **Brookgill** near **Noul Noul** on the Gippsland lakes was considered to be infested by evil **Mrarts**.[65]

Half human, half animal creatures called **Narguns** where made of stone and could turn back any spear or boomerang. These creatures lived in dark holes in the ground and awaited the coming of Aborigines in order to kill them. **Tutungals** where spirits which came in the night to punished children. These creature could be ordered away by parents if the children where sorry for being bad. **Dulugars** were man like hairy creatures who were very strong. These creatures lived in the mountains behind Suggan Buggan. When a women came into the area they would fly in to the air and take them away. **Baginis** were creatures with small hands and feet which were armed with sharp claws. These creatures looked like pretty girls and were female. When these creatures caught a male Aborigine they would make him make love to them. There was a creature called a **Dimbulan** which capture women , but after awhile let them return home. Along with the **Mrarts** there are ghostly beings called **Mahrachs** who scare the Aborigines. There are friendly beings called **Yabons** who sometimes take the shape of animals in order to help the Aborigines. There are also fairy like beings called **Nyols** but theses live in their own world and are not often seen by men.[66]

WESTERN DISTRICT

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[64]R.B.Smyth op.cit, p.471-472

[65]ibid, p.472

[66] A.Massola 'Bunjils Cave, Landsdown press, 1968, p.155-159

Some of the Western district Aborigines believed in both the **Bunyip** and the snake **Myndye** . It appears that the former was believed in the South of the Western district and the latter in the North. Nevertheless the information regarding the numia of the Western district is like the rest of Victoria very sketchy and patchy. Though from the available information it is fairly certain that these beliefs where extensive.

According to Massola the **Maara** believed in a 1) a being called **Ngallenyook** . This creature was feared very much by the Aborigines. It could cause sickness which could not be cured by the doctors. 2) a being called **Buurt-kuuruuk**. This was a female being that kived near the Hopkins river. 3) a being called **Neulam-kurrk** lived in caves craters and sink holes near Fiery creek. 4) Another female spirit was **Colbumatuan-kurrk** also lived near Fiery creek; she came in a strong wind to kill the Aborigines[67].

DJABWURRUNG

Dawson notes that the **Chaapwuuong** of the **Djabwurrung** group believed in at least three spirit beings. The **Chaapwuurong** believed in an evil being called **Muuruup** some times called **Wambeen** **neung** **been** **-been** **aa** - the maker of bad smells- This being was spoken of with dread and fear , he was considered to be the author of every misfortune. He came to earth in the form of lightning killing people , knocking over trees setting fire to **wuurms**[68] e.t.c. Some times he assumed the form of an ugly man hiding in scrubs or thickets. The **Muuruup** flits from place to place like lightning, he is very mischievous and hungers for the flesh of children. During the day the Aborigines are not very afraid of him

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[67] ibid, p.150

[68]Dawson op.cit, p.49

but at night there is great dread. **Muuruup** uses owls to watch for him.67 Dawson also names three other beings believed in by the **Chaapwuurong** without giving any detail : **Muutcheyok** - maker of bad smoke- , the female devil **Buurt** **kuuruuk** and the devil in the moon the **Kuurnok** **billy**[69]

DHAUWURDWURRUNG

Dawson only lists the names of the spirits for this group. The **Kuurn** **koan** **noot** believed in the : **Muuruup**, Dawson lists this being under the title of general devil, the **Wambeen** **neung** **been** **been** **aa**- maker of bad smoke, Dawson calls this a male devil, the female devil the **Buurt** **kuuruuk** and the devil in the moon the **Muuruup** **neung** **kuurn** **taarong** **gnat**. The **Peek** **whuurong** on the other hand believed in : the general devil called **Tambuur**, the male devil called **Tambuur**, the female devil called **Weaar** and the devil in the moon called **Muuruup** **neung** **yaheear** **gnat**.[70]

The creatures called **Net-nets** livedcat lake Codah and where mischievious little people who lived in caves made by naturaly piled up rocks. **Mahrachs** or ghosts also lived at Lke Condah and came out at night to hurt the Aborigines.[71]

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[69]ibid, p.x

[70]ibid, p,x

[71]A.Massola op.cit, p.150-152

From the records of Dawson it is fairly certain that the rest of the South of the Western district had similar beliefs. What exactly they where is impossible to say ; but the the tribes belonged to the same nation the beliefs might have been similar to the above ideas.

WERGAI

Apart from **Myndye** the **Wotjoballuk** [**Wergai** believed in a female creature called **Bain-bain-gurrk**. This creature fed on men. She lurked near camps and once caught the Aborigine could not escape. A creature called **Netto-gurrk** also caught men and eat them ; but she had a daughter who if she like a man would help him to escape.[72] A creature called **Gnatja** lived in hollows in the scrub , it had supernatural powers and only the doctors where exempt from it's prey.[73]

WATIWATI, JATIJATI, LATJILATJI, JARIJARI

Beveridge notes that these tribes believe in an evil spirit called **Gnambacootehela** The Aborigines are extremely afraid of him in the dark an impute all ill luck to him. These

[72]ibid , p.148

[73]ibid, p.148

tribes also believe in a water spirit who brings death to any one unless one is an initiated Aborigines.[74]

TATITATI, WATIWATI

Cameron notes for these tribes the belief that the spirits of the dead visit the earth. The Tati tati call it **Nguma- gumatch** and for the female ghosts it is called **Biriup- gumatch**. The Aborigines believe that these spirits revisit the places they passed their lives in. These spirits could turn themselves into objects of nature. According to the **Watiwati** the human ghost was called **Boongarnitchie** and was differnt to the soul[75]

SUMMARY

From the above it appears that the religious beliefs and feelings, of the Victorian Aborigines covered a wide spectrum of feelings and beliefs. These beliefs range from the beliefs about localized spirits and creatures, the numina, through to the Demas and in some cases a God . The feelings which the Victorian Aborigines experienced range from fear and dread ,a shudder, a qivvering of the limbs in the case of the numina, to a quite reverence in the case of some Gods.

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[74] P.Beveridge 'A Few Notes On The Dialects Habits Customs And Mythology Of The Lower Murray Aborigines', Transcript And Proceedings Of The Royal Society of Victoria, Vol.6, 1861, p.18-19

[75] A.P.Cameron 'Notes on the Tribes of New South Wales, J.A.I.,Vol.x1v 1884, p.363-364

This hidden presence permeated this world from end to end, from the hidden cave to the clouds themselves, from the mountain top to the river bed. The feelings associated with this presence ranged from the eerie to the somewhat sublime. The unseen entities asso ciated with this presence where not in any intimate personal relationship with the Aborigines, except in some cases with the doctors.

It appears that the belief in a God occurred in the Central district, while beliefs about Demas permeated the minds of the Aborigines in the Western district and in Gippsland. There appears to be evidence that some of these beliefs differed from localities within a tribe and varied between language groups. The unifying principle connecting all the Victorian Aborigines was the permeating ideas regarding the numina. Cautiously it appears that the beliefs regarding the Demas and the Gods follow the boundaries of the Aboriginal nations. This makes a bit of sense since these nations regarded other Aborigines as wild blackfellows it could follow that this was because they had different cultural beliefs.

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CHAPTER FIVE

'DREAMTIME BELIEFS OF THE PRE-CONTACT VICTORIAN ABORIGINES'

"When I walk in the fields, I am oppresed now and then with an innate feeling that everything I see has a meaning, if I could but understand it. And this feeling of being surrounded with truths which I cannot grasp amounts to indescribable awe ..."[1]

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[11] W.James, 1982, p.385

Myths are a portrait of the 'dreamtime', they are the vehical through which events that took place in the 'dreamtime' are convayed to the present generation.The 'dreamtime has such a profound effect upon Aboriginal consciousness that it should be empasised that the Aborigines myths, social life, **'religion' and spirituality** are so intertwined and interconected with the 'dreamtime' that a knowledge of these cannot be understood apart from and through knowledge of the 'dream-time' itself. Eliade notes that one cannot grasp the structure and function of mythical though without taking into account the 'mythology in its totality'[2]. Eliade captures the essence of mythlogy when he states " ...in every case where we have access to a still living tradition and not to an acculturated one one thing strikes us from the very beginning: the mythology not only constitutes as it were the 'scared history' of the tribe not only does it explain the total reality and justify its contradictions but it equally reveals a hierarchy in the series of fabulous events that it reports"[3]

UNCERTAINTY

The 'Dreamtime' is of such fundamental importance to understanding Aboriginal 'religion that a full understanding of the Aboriginal world views and way of life is , as Stanner says, only possible after the doctrines relating and about the Dreamtime are fully understood[4]. Nevertheless it should be empathised that ,as Elkin notes, "a full understanding by us , however has as yet to

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[2]M.Eliade 1984, p.75
[3]ibid, p.75
[4]W.E.H. Stanner 'Religion Totemism and Symbolism' in M.Charlesworth ed Religion in Aboriginal Australia , University of Queensland Press , 1989, p.146

be reached and only intensive philosophical research in selected tribes will give this"[5]. Thus if the material from the rest of Aboriginal Australia is any guide line, it could be said, with some certainty, that the 'Dreamtime' played an as important part in Victorian Aboriginal religion as it did through out the rest of Aboriginal Australia.

The data on Victorian Aboriginal 'Dreamtime' beliefs is however very scanty and vague. This lack of detail makes it very difficult to reconstruct the pre-contact 'Dreamtime' beliefs. Also deriving inductions based upon 'Dreamtime' beliefs held through out Aboriginal Australia is itself difficult since these beliefs varied ; as Dean notes,in his thesis **The Australian Aboriginal Dreamtime**, that though "the primordial period or 'Dreamtime' may be universal to Aboriginal Australia ... the cosmogonies, cosmologies and metaphysics underlying the various Aboriginal interpretations of this period vary through the communities"[6]

ARCHETYPE

Now even though 'Dreamtime' beliefs varied through out Aboriginal Australia, there is a certain archetypal form to these beliefs - certain universal and reoccurring patterns appear in all Aboriginal accounts of the 'Dreamtime'. It would seem from the universal occurrence of these archetypal forms that these patterns would also be applicable to Victoria.

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[5] A.P.Elkin 1961, p.204

[6] C.Dean 1997 . p.4

Through out Aboriginal Australia before European contact there was no one Aboriginal religion. However , though there were different religions, certain similarities can be seen between them. Although there are certain apparent exceptions in Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland (ie the spirit beings **Baiame, Bunjil, Darumulun and Nurelli**) the Aborigines, as Stanner said have " no gods just or unjust to adjudicate the world"[7]. What the Aborigines have are ancestral spirits; spirit which are either, flora, or fauna [or hybrids of] in form; and which do not have relationships with the Aborigines, with the exception of clever men. There is no prayer or priesthood in Aboriginal society. There is no sharp distinction between the sacred and the secular, since the spirit world and the human world interpenetrate. All aspects of the Aboriginal environment are affected by the power of the spirits. The very land itself is akind of 'church' ; it is a kind of theophany where the land contains the essence of the Ancestors, and is the work of the Ancestors. The whole land is a religious sanctuary, with special regions throughout it which have acquired special sacred status. The Aborigines regard themselves whether as individuals, groups categories, sexes or genetic stock, to be in a mystical communion, via the sacred places, with certain totemic beings. In this regard the whole life of the Aborigines is a religious experience. They are intimately connected with their whole environment which is pervaded by the supernatural, the result being that their experience of the whole environment is charged with 'numinous' import.

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[7] W.E.H. Stanner 'The Dreaming No More' in White Man Got No Dreaming A.N.U.Press 1979, p.31

COSMOGONY

For the Aborigines the world was not created *ex nihilo*. Rather , the preexisting ancestral spirits transformed the pre-existing world of things and conditions into the structures they are today. These structures are fixed once and for all. They are immutable. This primordial period, called the 'dreamtime', was the very foundation of life itself. Inthis period the ways of life, the law, the moral code were set down to be followed eternally. Because the structures that were laid down in the 'dreamtime' are immutable, the 'dreamtime' is "eternal"; the structures continue from the past to the present and into the future i.e "the eternal dreamtime" The 'dreamtime' the period of fashioning, organizing and moulding an unordered world is the fount of the whole Aboriginal world view.

What happened in the 'dreamtime' became the master plan for ritual, social behavior, morality and religious views. What happened in the 'dreamtime' has a sacred quality; though in some cases the religious repertoire is altered, in the main, it is never disputed or compromised. The 'dreamtime' provides the basis of all human imperatives, the kinship system, native geographical categories, the utilization of the land and the sacred nature of the land itself. Inthe 'dreamtime' the cultural heroes and Ancestors lived, these sometimes made the natural features and instituted the immutable rites, customs, tribal law and morality. In his 1948 edition of The Australian Aborigines Elkin noted that " to say a custom is ... 'dreamtime' is to give it a final and unimpeachable authority"[8].Eliade in talking about the Dyakes of Borneo catures the meaning of a cosmogony when he states " ...the myths succed each other and articulate themselves into a

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[8] A.P.Elkin 1948, p.202

sacred history which is continualy recovered in the life of the community as wel as in the existence of each individual. Through the cosmogonic myth the [community] progessivly unveils the structures of reality and their own proper mode of being. What happened in the beginning describes once both the original perfection and the destiny of each individual."[9]

Through out Aboriginal Australia there is a large diversity in regard to what actually happened in the 'dreamtime' or primordial period. though as we have seen there is a general theme about the nature of the 'dreamtime' there are as probably as many variations on 'dreamtime' cosmogony as there are 'religions'. These variation range from the golden age of the Northern **Aranda**, to the non idealized age of the **Murinbata**, from the period-that-ended of the **Tiwi** to the coexisting parallel reality (with ours) of the **Wailbiri**. The agents of the transformation and reconstructing of the pre-existent environment could be almost every living thing in the case of the Northern **Aranda** whereas in the case of the communities of Arnhem land and South East Australia, it is a creator or creators. In some cases the 'dreamtime' ancestors transformed themselves into animals, as with the **Murinbata**, in other cases the male and female ancestors transformed themselves into plants and animals as on Groote Eylandt and Melville island; in other cases still the great ancestors remain human, as with the **Wawalik** and **Djanggawul** sisters of Arnhem land[10].

Just as there is diversity in dreamtime cosmogony in Aboriginal Australia, there is also a large range of different 'dreamtime' ontologies. For some Aboriginal communities the 'dreamtime' is:

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[9]Eliade op.cit p.77

[10] C.Dean op.cit ,p. 24

1) a past reality [**Tiwi, Wuradjeri, Jigalong**, 2) at the same time a past reality and a concurrent reality with the present reality[**Mardujara, Murngin, Wailbiri, Ooldea, Warrabri**]. For some communities where the 'dreamtime' is at the same time a past reality and a concurrent reality with the present there are two variations: a) the concurrent reality is parallel with the present [**Murngin, Wailbiri, Ooldea, Warrabri**] b) the concurrent reality is **within** the present reality [**Murinbata, Mardujara**][11].

The above survey indicates that at a more specific or deeper level there is a wide diversity in Aboriginal ideas regarding the 'dreamtime'.This diversity makes it extremely difficult to draw inductions, other than thoughs which are of a general kind, about Victorian 'dreamtime' beliefs. Nevertheless some specific inductions can be drawn.

VOCABULARY

The only recorded Victorian Aboriginal word which translates as 'dreamtime ' is the **Wemba Wemba** word **Jemeragi** recorded by L. Hercus in 1965[12]. the **Wemba Wemba** belong to the Western Kulin linguistic group (map 2) and their language is akin to the **Djadjala** of the Wimmera[13]. The **WembaWemba** term being the only recorded word meaning 'dreamtime'

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[11] ibid, p.v1

[12] L.Hercus '1965, p.204

[13] ibid, p.204

should not cause as to think that the Victorian Aborigines did not have a term for this period. The **Wemba Wemba** belonged to a linguistic stock which encompassed the whole of the Western district of Victoria; of this stock R.Dixon notes this stock had about 70% of their vocabulary in common[14]. Consequently it could be reassembly assumed that other Aboriginal tribes of the Western district had terms for the 'dreamtime'

For the Western district Stone in 1911 records a **Giurrmjanyuk** [of the **Wemba Wemba**] word **Nuil mea goon** which he translates as "a long time ago"[15]. Dawson in 1881 records the **Chaap Wuurong** [**Wadawurrung**] word **Mulla meea**, the **Kuurn kopan** word **Wuulaekitto**, and the **Peek wuurong** word **Mulli yitto** all translating as "long time ago"[16]. Now apart from these words there appears to be no other recorded words which might mean 'dreamtime'.The sarcity of Victorian Aboriginal words signifing 'dreamtime' need not be suprising ; as the lack of a specific term for 'dreamtime' is common within Aboriginal Ausralia. Stanner in his 1953 article **The Dreaming** points out that " comparable terms from other tribes are often untranslatable[17]". Many other groups on the other hand e.g the **Koko Daua, the Oikand** and other groups from

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[14] R.Dixon ,1980 ,p. 259.

[15] A.C.Stone ' 1911, p.464

[16] J.Dawson 1981, p.xxiv

[17] Stanner op.cit ,p.23

Queensland apart from a special adjectival suffix, have no term for the 'dreamtime'[18]; thus it is not necessary abnormal to find no other recorded Victorian Aboriginal word for 'dreamtime'. Now though there is no recorded word for 'dreamtime' in any other part of Victoria, the available myths have elements in common with the 'dreamtime' myths of the Western district and other known 'dreamtime' accounts from Aboriginal Australia. These similarities to known archetypal 'dreamtime' motifs makes it almost certain that the myths from other parts of Victoria can be called 'dreamtime' myths.

Though there is a large amount of material documenting Victorian Aboriginal myths, the information dealing with the beginning of the 'dreamtime' or primordial period - the period of ordering, forming and structuring is small and restricted to limited areas. The areas, where there appears to be information dealing with the beginning of the Aboriginal 'dreamtime', are in the North Western district of Victoria and in the area inhabited by the **Kurnai** of Gippsland. A small amount remains of possibly the: **Urunjeri-baluk** of the **Woiworung** [**WoiWurrung**], **Djadjawurrung** and the **Bunwurrung**. For the rest of Victoria the information on the beginning of the primordial period, if it existed, is very sketchy. If we consider the amount of tribal beliefs relating to the beginning of the 'dreamtime' through out Aboriginal Australia, then it is fairly obvious that the extent Victorian 'dreamtime' accounts are fragmentary in the least.

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[18] C.Dean op.cit, p.3

COSMOGONIES ONE

Smyth records a 'dreammtime' belief from an unspecified area of Northern Victoria [possibly around lake Victoria] According to Smyth these Aborigines believed that the world was created by beings called **Nooralie**. These beings had the form of the Eagle and the Crow. there was continual war between the Eagle and the crow' which ended when they decided to divide the Murray Aborigines into two groups; the **Mak-quarra** [Eagalhawk] and the **Kil-parra** [Crow].The war continued between these two groups with the crow taking every possible advantage over his nobler foe the Eagle. Out of this conflict there was a final agreement between the two groups regarding the marriage of these Aborigines.[19]In the beginning the sun did not exist ,so **Noorali** decided that the sun should appear. The Aborigines believe that because the sun needs fuel when it goes below the horizon it get new fuel for its fires.The moon was considered to have an aberrant course in the beginning but her motion was finally regulated by **Nooralie**; thus from then on the moon has obeyed the **Nooralie**.

WADIWADI

A.L.P.Cameron writing in 1884 records what appears to be the 'dreamtime' beliefs of the **Wathi Wathi** [**Wadi Wadi**. According to Cameron the **Wathi Wathi** believed in a being called **Tha-tha-puli** .This being was regarded as having supernatural powers, he made men, women and

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[19] R.B.Smyth 1972,p.423-424.

dogs - who used to talk before he took the power of speech from them. The **Wathi Wathi** believed that the earth was originally inhabited by a race called the **Bookoomuri**. These **Bookoomuri** where famous for their fighting ability and hunting . **Tha-tha-puli** eventually changed these beings into animals after which he then created the present race. Cameron notes that there is also a tradition in which it is believed that the **Bookoomuri** affected their own transformation. Nevertheless these **Bookoomuri** it is said in their animal forms had an interest in the present race and as a consequence taught them valuable knowledge; it is said that the magical powers of the doctors, disease makers and rainmakers is handed down from these **Bookoomuri**.[20]

The **Wathi Wathi** have a legend about fire which accounts for the presence of some open plains. The **Bookoomuri** and the present race where eager to obtain fire from it's sole possessors the **Bookoomuri** **Koorambin** the water rat and **Pandawinda** the code fish. The **Bookoomuri** ,**Karigari** the hawk saw **Kooramin** and **Pandawinda** cooking mussels. **Karigari** at first caused a fire to start among the reeds ; this was extinguished. Then he caused a whirlwind to blow which scattered the fire and set the reeds and forest on fire and laid waste large tracts of country upon which trees have since ceased to grow so that where there was once forests there is now large bare plains. Cameron notes that the **Ta-ta-thi** [**DadiDadi**] have another version of this myth. [21]

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[20] A.L.P.Cameron '1884, pp.364-369

[21] ibid p.368

The **Wathi Wathi** also believe that Willandra creek is the path or track of a gigantic kangaroo which was laid down as this kangaroo was fleeing from two **Bookoomuri**. There are a few hills occurring in the district which are believed to be the camps of the **Bookoomuri** which followed the giant kangaroo. Merowie creek is also believed to be the track of some mystic animal which these **Bookoomuri** were pursuing.In regard to totems it is believed that **Bookoomuri** where transformed into the class to which belongs the Eagalhawk, Kangaroo and Bandicoot - of which they are these creatures ancestors.[22]

WEMBA WEMBA

In 1861 Beveridge records that the Lake Boga tribe, the **Gourrmjandidj** of the **Wemba Wemba** Aborigines, believed that originally they where animals and birds - unlike the **Wathi Wathi**. In the beginning there was no sun the earth was enclosed in darkness. After a quarrel between the native companion and the emu the native companion threw an egg up into the sky which then broke upon a pile of wood - which was prepared by the good spirit **Gnawaderoot** - causing the wood to break onto fire and flooding the earth into light. **Gnawderoot** saw that the earth looked better in light and as a consequence he continued to light the wood each day. Immediately after the first appearance of the light good and bad conduct where rewarded. Those birds and animals who had helped their fellow neighbors and looked after their food -without reference to what their neighbors fed upon - where transformed into Aborigines. After this transformation the birds and animals who had been grumblers where given to them to feed upon. Beveridge notes that this and the following myth are theonly two myths which deal with the

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[22]ibid, p.368-369

rewarding of good behavior and the punishing of bad[23]. Beveridge also notes that " [the Aborigines] have tales and legends about nearly every planet in the heavens , but it would lengthen [his] paper too much to transcribe them..."[24].

WADIWADI,JARIJARI, LADJILADJI, WAIKIWAIKI

In 1883 Beveridge gave a somewhat similar , though more detailed account of the 'dreamtime' cosmogony of the **Boora Boora**, **Watty Watty** [**Wadi Wadi**], **Yairy Yairy** [**Jari Jari**], **Litchy Litchy** [**Ladji Ladji**] and **Waiky Waiky** of Aborigines of North Western Victoria. In the long forgotten past the only light upon the earth (**tungie**) came from the moon (**mitian**) and the stars (**toorts**) no people inhabited the earth ; only animals. One day during this semi darkness the female native companion (**koortinie**) and the emu (**kurwie**) where quarreling . The native companion during this qaurrell throw an emu egg up into the sky (**tyrrily**) where it broke upon a pile of wood prepared by **Ngondenont** the good spirit. The concussion of the breakage caused a spontaneous fire which flooded the world in light. **Ngondenont** saw the advantage of the light for the dwellers on the earth and therefrom vowed never to leave the earth in perpetual darkness from then on. The Aborigines say he has never broken his vow and they point to prove this that in the morning the sun (**nowie**) diffuses little warmth but as the day get

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[23] P.Beveridge 1861, p.23

[24] ibid, p.22

longer the heat get hotter and as the heat get cooler as the day progress this is because the wood is diminishing.

According to the Aborigines the Pleiads (**panmarootootie**) are made up of seven **mooroongoors** (virgins). **Ngondenont** seeing that these **mooroongoors** had maintained their virginity until the advent of grey hairs deemed them far to good to associate with their dissolute tribe ; as a consequence he translated them into the **tyrily** so that they could see the activities of their sisterhood. The **mooroongoors** could then direct any of their sisters who where tempted from the path of rectitude back onto the right course. The **lyoors** could always see the **mooroongoors** by looking up into the sky and according to Beveridge this would make them " scarcely of any gross indiscretion in the faces of the **panmarootoortie** whose lives whilst on the **tungie** where without stain or reproach"[25].

It is believed that **boorongkootchal** (Venus) is sent by **Ngondenont** in the early morning to let **tungie** know that he is going to light up the **nowie**. This is done in order that the **wartongies** (people) can get ready for their daily avocations. In the evening **boorongkootchal** is termed **Worka Worka**, at this time of day he is considered to be well being of gestation whether man or beast. The Aborigines believe that gravid **lyoors** when they observe him calmly looking down upon them from the unclouded sky like a small moon (**panoo mitian**) he will grant them any

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[25] P.Beveridge ' 1883, P.60-62

wish they may have in regard to their offspring. On the other should they see **Worka Worka** in a clouded sky they believe that the fat of their unborn will be a fitful one.[26]

WERGAI

Stanbridge writing in 1866 gives an account of the 'dreamtime' beliefs of the **Boorong** tribe of the **Wotjobulak** [**Wergaia**] of the Wimmera. According to the **Boorong** the earth is flat and it was in perpetual darkness before **Pupperimbul** made the sun (**Gnowee**).**Pupperimbal** was one of a race that inhabited the land at this time , this race was called the **Nurrumbung-uttias** or old spirits. These beings possessed fire and had all the characteristics ofthe present race- this is different to the **Wathi Wathi**. The **Nurrumbung-uttias** where translated into the heavens before the present race came into existence. All the celestial bodies and all phenomena in the sky are believed to be due to these beings[27].

Howitt and Massola give another account, of creation, different to Stanbridge. According to these authors the **Wotjobulak** [**Wergaia**] believed the earth and all upon it to have been made bya being called **Bunjil** or **Mani Ngurak**. **Bunjil** had a son called **Gargomitch** who it is said supervised his fathers creation.[28]. In contradistinction to Stanbridge Howitt points out that " in

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[26] ibid, p.62

[27] W.E.Stanbidge , 1861, p.301

[28]A. Massola 1966, p.272-273.

one of the **Wotjobulak** legends it is said that at the time [the beginning] all animals were men and women."[29]

There are two **Wergaia** accounts regarding the appearance of the sun. According to the **Boorong** an emu's egg was prepared and cast into the **tyrille** by **Pupperimbul**. Another tribe believe that the emu's egg was prepared by **Bermberm-gl** and carried into the sky by a bird they don't kill called **Penmen** [30]. The **Boorong** also believethat the Murray river was made by the serpent called **Mindi** - the existing **Mindi** are considered to be about eighteen feet long.[31]

WADAWURRUNG DJARGLURWURRUNG

The information regarding the 'dreamtime' beliefs of the **WadaWurrung** and the **DjaraglurdWurrung** is non existent; though Stanbridge in passing gives as some interesting information as to what these beliefs may have been. Stanbrigde gives a very concise account of the **Wergaia** beliefs regarding the creation of the heavenly bodies; these accounts are terrestrial aiteologies, much like the Greeks. Stanbridge notes that " all the tribes [**WadaWurrung**, **Djaraglurd Wurrung**] have traditions and particular families have the reputation in their respective tribes of possessing the most exact knowledge of them [the stars].[32]

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[29] A.W.Howitt 1904, p.429

[30] Standbridge op.cit p.301

[31] ibid, p.302.

[32] ibid, p.301.

WOIWURRUNG

Howitt gives a 'dreamtime' account , of the begining , of the **Woiworung** [**woiwurrung**] possibly the **Urunjeri-balak** clan. According to Howitt the **Woiworung** believed that in the beginningthe supreme being **Bunjil** and his sons, **Thara** (hawk), **Yukope** (musk lorikeet), **Jurt-jurt** (nankeen kestral),**Dantun** (Blue mountain lorikeet) and **Turnung** (brushtailed phascogale) lived upon the earth. While **Bunjil** and **Balaiang** (bat) where feuding **Bunjil** sent his sons to burn all the country towards the Murray river. In this fire the bat was burned and thus has remained bare and grinning ever since. After this event **Bunjil** and his sons went up into the sky and became stars.[33]

Smyth gives a sightly different account of a **Wa-woo-rong** [**Woiwurrung**] 'dreamtime' creation myth. According to Smyth the **Wa-woo-rong** believed that **Bunjil** made the earth (**Beek-narreen**) and everything else. **Bunjil** had two sons **Ta-jerr** and **Tarrn-nin** These sons **Bunjil** sent to destroy bad men and women - those who had killed and eaten Aborigines.[34].

BUNWURRUNG

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[33] A.W.Howitt, 1888 ' p.415

[34] R.B.Smyth op.cit,p.423

The **Boo-noo-rong** [**Bunwurrung**] yet again have another creation myth. According to the **Boo-noo-rong** **Pun-jil** or **Bun-jil** with the help of his son and brother made all things except women **Pun-jil** had a wife whose face he had never seen called **Boi-boiI** **Pun-jil** had a brother called **Pal-ly-yan** and a son **Bin-beal**. **Pun-jil** always carries a large knife (**bul-li-to kul-pen-kul-pen gye-up** with which he had made the earth and many mountains, rivers and creeks[35].

W Thomas gives a bit more detail as to the **Bunwurring** beliefs. Thiomas says that **Punjil** is consideed the maker of the trees, man animals and the earth. **Punjil** had a wife called **Boi Boi. Boi Boi** bore **Punjil** two childern a son called **Binbeal** and a daughter called **Karakarook**. **Binbeal** had sovereignty of the heavens and **Karararook** the incidental occurrences on earth, Thomas says that deity next to Punjil was **Pallian** his brother **Pallian** made the creeks ,rivers and waters. He also made alll the fish in the rivers, seas and oceans. **Palian** had dominion over all these waters, upon all that he walked and in which he bathed. [36]

DJADJAWURRUNG

E.S.Parker writing in 1854 gives an account of a **Jajowurrong** [**Djadjawurrung]** Dreamtime eitology. It should be born in mind that Parker notes that " THESE CRUDE TRADITIONS

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[35] ibid,p.423

[36]**Thomas.W** 'Brief account of the Aborigines of Australia felix', in T.F.Bride's ed Letters from Victorian pioneers, Heinemann, 1969, p.421

EVIDENTLY VARY WITH DIFFERENT LOCALITIES"[37] According to Parker the **Jajowurrung** believed in a benevolent being called **Bibeal.** The **Jajatwurrng** believed that originaly there was only one kangaroo and one emu. **Punjil** or **Boonjil**, a being of suprem wisdom took these animals and cut them up into small pieces from which he made the larger number of these animals; which thus stocked the world. **Boonjl** it is said taught the manufacture and use of weopens and spears. **Boonjil** finally went up into the sky where his name is given to the planent Jupiter.[38]

Another tradition of the **Jajowurrung** hold that originaly there was only one huge mountain occuping the whole country This mountain was inhabited by a gigantic eagle and crow, as well as some other animals. The eagle being stronger was able to eject the crowfrom it's nest; as a consequence the crow being wise went away and discivered fire. The crow set fire to the forests where the eagle dwelt causing a vast conflgulation which destroyed all things and cuased disruption of the mountain; which reulted in the formation of the present hills and plains from the remains.[39] It should be noted that Thomas disagred with Parker as he said " the personages of the other deities or superior beings spoken of by Mr Parker do not tally with account recieved by me."[40]

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[37]E,S,Parker 1962, p24

[38]ibid, p.24

[39]ibid, p.24

[40] Thomas, op.cit, 421

These disagreements by Parker/Thomas in regard to the **Jajowurrung**, Stanbridge/Howitt, Massola in regard to the **Watjobulak** , Smyth/Howitt in regard to the **Woiwurrung** and Howitts two account in regard to the Kurnai should not make us question the competance of these ethnologists. Similar disagreements are recorded in twentieth century anthropology notably Spencer and Gillan arguing that reincarnation beliefs is found amongst the **Arabunna** and Elkin finding that it did not.[41] Theses disagreements should caution us in to accepting that there is belief homogeneity amongst members of a culture. These disagreements indicate that members of a community may hold different beliefs from those the informant gives the anthropologist.

RECONSTRUCTION ONE

The above 'Dreamtime' accounts indicate a number of IMPORTANT POINTS It would seem from the two different versions given by Stanbridge about the beginning of the sun, the two different accounts given by Beveridge regarding the beginning of the sun and Cameron's two different accounts regarding the transformation of the **Bookoomuri**, indicate that different versions of the same myth where current amongst different tribes of the same language group. This as can be seen also applies to the creation accounts of the **Wiowurrung** and **Bunwurrung**. Also the simultaneous occurrence of the emu's egg in the account of Beveridge and Stanbridge, the similarity between the **Nurrumbung-uttias** and the **Booroomuri**, and the occurrence of astronomical myths could indicate that language groups which where close together geographically had similar 'dreamtime' motifs. The occurrence of astronomical myths with the

Wadawurrung and the **Djadjawurrung** leads to the possibility that the other **Kulin** groups i.e the **Woiwurrung**, **Bunwurrung**, **Daungwurrung** and the **Nguraillamwurrung** also had an extensive array of astronomical myths, as did the **Boorong** tribe of the **Wergaia** . Smyth records a Yarra river [**Woiwurrung**] myth which has a snippet of an astronomical myth i.e :**Kar-ak-ar-ook** a female (now the seven sisters) was the only one who could make fire (**Weenth**.Thomas states that "... to go into the various traditions they have of the creation of the world, man, women and animals is impossible suffice it to state that they are a people that have names for particular stare, as the Southern Cross... they have also an idea of several imaginary beings, almost all of the dreaded class : also superstitious notions of certain birds, native bears and extraordinary appearances in the heavens"[42]

From the above the important conclusion to be drawn is that it would thus seem that there was a diversity within language groups and similarity between language groups in regard to 'dreamtime' cosmologies and cosmogonies with regard to the Western district Aborigines. In the main it can be seen that Western district Dreamtime beliefs are different from those of the **Kulin** of central Victoria.

COSMOGONY TWO

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[41]C.P.Mountford and A.Harvy 1941, p.159

[42] **Thomas,** , p.421

KURNAI

According to the Kurnai of Gippsland long ago a being called **Mungan-ngaur** lived upon the earth. This being as well as teaching the Kurnai of that time to make canoes, weapons, in fact all the arts the Kurnai now know he also gave them their names. **Mungan-ngaur** had a son called **Tundin** who was married and is regarded as being the direct ancestor of the Kurnai - the Weintwin or father's father The Jeraeil or initiation ceremony of the Kurnai was instituted by **Mungan-ngaur** and conducted by **Tundun** - who made the instruments which bear his wifes and his name. A tribal traitor revealed the secretes of the Jerail to women with the consequence that **Mungan-ngaur** sent fire , which filled the whole space between the earth and the sky. Fathers killed their children, husbands killed their wives and brethren killed brethren; all in all men went mad with fear over the fire. Another consequence of the fire was that the sea flooded the land drowning nearly all mankind. The ones that survived the flood became the ancestors of the Kurnai. Some of these ancestors turned into birds , animals, fishes and reptiles ; **Tundum** and his wife became porpoises. **Mungan-ngaur** left the earth and went up into the sky; where he still remains[43].

Howitt in another paper gives a sightly more detailed account of the Kurnai's 'dreamtime'. According to Howitt the Kurnai believe that before there where men the earth was inhabited by beings the prototypes ,but more powerful in magic , than the present Kurnai. These beings though they did not create man, they did perfect him from the unformed and scarcely made creatures that then existed. The ancestors of the Kurnai are known as the **Muk-kurnai** - or

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[43]Howitt, 1884, p.313.

collectively as the **Muk-jiak** that is excellent meat, while other animals used for food are called Jiak. These **Muk-kurnai** [translated as 'eminent men or in another sense the grandfathers] where composite creatures i.e a bird-man, reptile-man or animal-man. Along with these **Muk-kurnai** there were also the **Muk-rukut** - being eminent women[44]. The Kurnai believe that in his endeavors to advance their race in the beginning the **Muk-kurnai** helped **Mungan-ngaur**[45].

The **Muk-kurnai** where comprised of twenty one animals :**Boran** the pelican, **Gala** the koala, **Bataluk** the goana; **Djirra** the kangaroo; **Barndagrin** the mopoke; **Tuk** the musk-duck; **Kartu** the blue heron; **No-yang** the congar eal **Takwun** the wallaby; **Watun** the possum; **Gwamurmurung** the eagalhawk; **Barn** the dingo; **Wreng** the black duck; **Turtbring** the red-breasted robin; **Nartut** the wombat; **Tide-lek** the frog; **Gurun** the porpoise; **Gandu** the whale; **Kuni** the cormorant; **Biwing** the sea-eagle - **Bewing** and the soldier bird, because they made a lot of noise, where sometimes referred as the **Muk-rukut**.[46] Howitt says that the crow was also one of the **Muk-kurnai**.[47]

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[44] A,W,Howitt 1975, p.21-22

[45] A.W.Howitt in J.G Frazer ed Native Races of Australiasia, Percy, Lund,Humpheries, 1975, p.21-22

[46] A MaSSOLA 1968 p.168

[47]Howitt op.cit p.22

From the above there apears to be two seperat Kurnai Dreamtime accounts. The first account seems to be one where in the beginning there was a supreme being **Munganngaur**. The second account seems to be one where in th beginning there where beings the prototype of the Kurnai. Either Howitt is recording diferrent versions or the two seperat accounts only appear to be seperat because the whole account is more complicated and has not been recorded adequately.

RECONSTRUCTION TWO

The above accounts shows a number of important points i.e that there were a number of divergent Dreamtime accounts through out Victoria. These account can be grouped together into groups containing two elemnts.

The first group is made up of: 1) at the beginning of the Dreamtime the earth was in existence i.e North Western Victoria: 2) at the begining of the Dreamtime the earth did not exist i.e Central Victoria. The first account agrees with the useual Dreamtime archetypal account, the second account doesnot.

The second group is made up of: 1) those tribes where humans where transformed into animals i.e North Western Victoria. The Kurnai maintain that certain ancestors turned into animals; likewise the Wotjobulak argue that animals were men and women, 2) those tribes where humans where created by a supreme being i.e Central Victoria. These tribes contradict Howitt when he says that " in the tribes of South Eastern Australia the ancestors appear in the guise of totems or thheriomorphic human beings... like the Alcheringa ancestors and the **Mura-Mura**"[48]

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[48]ibid, p.48

In North Western Victoria there appears to be two seperate traditions: 1) there are those tribes which believe in beings who were the original inhabitants, 2) those who had a supreame being/

From the above a number of conclusions can be drawn about Victorian Dreamtime beliefs, In the first case it appears that there where at least three distinct groups i.e Gippsland, Central Victoria, and North-WesternVictoria

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APPENDIX

ABORIGINAL POETS OF THE PRE-CONTACT VICTORIAN ABORIGINES

R.M. and C.H.Berndt note in 1988[1] that there is not a great deal of published material in regard to the singing and poetic expression of the Australian Aborigines. Up to 1900 there where only two account recording a Victorian Aboriginal poetic expression[2] and only one anthropological work outlining the nature of this expression.[3] The Berndts' note that in general the Aborigines have no spoken verse but instead songs and chants.[4] This characterisation is also valid for the Pre-contact Victorian Aborigines. The Reverend G.W.Torrance investigated the music of these songs or poems and though it was based only on one interview he concluded from this example that it may be described " as a kind of nasal monotone or chant, usually preceded by a downward procession somewhat resembling the "intonation" in Gregorian music".[5] Now the characteristics of the Victorian Aboriginal poetry as outlined by Howitt makes Victorian poetry unique to Victoria, but at the same time fitting into a general Indo- European poetic structure.

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[1]R.M.Berndt & C.H.Berndt, 1988, p.368
[2]A.W.Howitt, 1887, Melbournesis, 1877
[3]A.W.Howitt, 1887.
[4]R.M.Berndt & C.H.Berndt, op.cit,p.372

Howitt records that " the songs are numerous and of varied character, and are connected with almost every part of the Australian savage, either in peace or war, which is not in some measure connected with song"[6]. The Berndts likewise note that is true for the rest of Aboriginal Australia[7]. According to Howitt " the makers of the Australian songs or the combined songs and dances, are the poets of the tribe and are held in great esteem. Their names are known to the neighbouring peoples and their songs are carried from tribe to tribe until the very meaning of the words is lost as well as the original sources of the song[8]. No where else in the literature of Aboriginal songs is it recorded that the poets are held in high esteem. This high standing is similar to that accorded to the Vedic ***Kavi***,[9] the Welsh ***derwydd***[10]**,** the Irish **fifi**[11]**.**

Howitt also records , which appears to be unique to Victoria that some poets came from family of poets. Howitt nots that " the bard who composed [the] song came from a poetic stock. His father and his father's father before him are said to have been "the makers of songs which made men sad or joyful when they heard them""[12]. Graves points out that the Welsh and Irish poets passed on their craft to pupils[13]. On the other hand Eliade nots

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[5]Rev. G.W.Torrence, 1887, p.335
[6]Howitt op.cit, p.328
[7]Berndt, op.ct, pp.362-387
[8]Howitt op.cit p.329.
[9]E.B.Findly Mantra kavisastra inH.P.Alper ed Understanding Mantras, State universty of New York, 1989, pp.35-44
[10]R.Graves 1989,p.17-27
[11]ibid, pp.17-27
[12]Howitt op.cit, p.330
[13]Graves op.cit, p.18

that certain iron smiths passed down their trade to their sons and that some of these smiths where poets also[14].

Howitt records four sorts of poetic inspiration three of these are similar to the rest of Australia but one appears to be unique to Victoria. The first form of poetic inspiration which the Victorian poet could access was unique to Victoria. Like the Vedic ***Kavi*** the Aboriginal poet could have a religious experience where by he was interred by the supreme being **Bunjil**. According to Howitt the "sacred singer" was inspired by **Bunjil.** As Howitt describes it " **Bunjil** himself "rushes down" into the heart of the singer"[15]. This experience is akin to the Vedic ***kavi*** who himself was inspired by a God ie **Agni**[16] . The second form of inspiration came from a source common in Aboriginal Australia, namely dreams. The Victorian Aborigine obtained the songs from the spirits of deceased relatives while during sleep in dreams[17].

Dean, in his **The Aboriginal Dreamtime,** notes that some Aboriginal communities contact the Dreamtime through Dreams. In this case it would be interesting to know if the Victorian Aborigines likewise contacted the Dreamtime through Dream. Nevertheless it should be born in mind that Dreams where not a universal way into the Dreamtime. As Dean has shown different Aboriginal communities regarded the Dreamtime differently. Some considered it a parallel reality, some regard it was as being a past reality, others

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[14]Eliade 1978, p.98
[15]Howitt, op.cit, p.330
[16]Findly op.cit, p.22
[17]Howitt, op.cit, p.330

regarded it as being both a past reality and a concurrent reality and others still a concurrent reality within the present[18].

While obtaining songs during sleep is quite common in Australia[19] the acquiring of them via dead relatives appears to be unique to Victoria. Also the Aboriginal doctors obtained in some cases their charms and intonations via dreams[20]. Though with these poets Howitt considered them inferior to the others[21]. The third way that a poet could obtain inspiration was from something he has killed. Kurbura according to Howitt killed a native bear and upon being possessed by its spirit compose a chant or poem[22]. This is a bit similar to the way a poet obtains his poem in Western Arnhem land. The Berndts record that the songman obtains his poem via a familiar such as an owl, snake, frog, bird or dead child[23]. The fourth and finally recorded way of obtaining inspiration is from natural as distinct from supernatural sources. Howitt records that Umbara of the Coast Murring had told him that the poem came to him " not in sleep as to some men, but when tossing on the waves in his boat with the waters jumping up around him[24]. The inspiration from natural sources ie grief ect is recorded through out Australia[25].

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[18]Dean 1990, pp43-57
[19]Berndts, op.cit, p.384
[20]Howitt, op.cit, p.335
[21]ibid, p.333
[22]ibid, p.333
[23]Berndts, op.cit, p.379
[24]Howitt, op.cit, p.331
[25]Berndts, op.cit,pp.337-382

As was said above the poems cover the whole gamut of Aboriginal life. Howitt captures the range of the poems when he notes," some songs are only used as dance music; some are descriptive of events which have struck the composer; some are comic or pathetic. There is also an extensive class of song or chants connected with the practice of magic and of these many are what may be called incantations- words of power chanted in the belief that supernatural influence is not asked but compelled by them - influence for evil or for warding of evil"[26]. Now just as there is an outer and inner class of songs or poems through out Australia there was similarly a class amongst the Victorian Aborigines. Howitt only records that it was poems connected with initiations which where hidden from the uninitiated and women.[27]

Howitt records eight songs or poems and Torrence five . These poems are from male informant. Though perhaps the first recorded Victorian poem was that of a women. R.Howitt in 1840 recorded the poem a mother composed on the death of her child call Wild flower [**Tullamarine**]. This poem has been turned into one resembling rhymed verse. Though this reconstruction is totally divorced from the style recorded by Howitt and Torrance it is worth recording in that it probably captures the feelings expressed by the grieving mother.

Tullamarine

Tullamarine , thou lovely flower

I saw thee in a happy hour

[26]Howitt, op.cit, p.328

When first I gazed upon my boy

I saw thee with a mother's joy

Methought thy beauty on me smiled

And by thy name I called thee child

And thence alike with joy were seen

Both boy and flower Tullamarine

The lights of heaven appear and go

Both stars and flowers their seasons know

This is thy season thou art seen

Sweet earthly star, Tullmarine

Soother of many a early hour

By forest-stream, in forest bower

I gathered thee with choices care

And wore thee fondly in my hair

Wide wandering through the woods away

Where with thy bloom the ground was gay

I called the then the flower of joy

Sweat namesake of my darling boy

He grew he flourished by my side

[27]ibid, p.328

He ran he gathered the with pride
But woe is me an evil hour
Death stole away my human flower

I wander in my sorrow's night
My star is emptied of its light
Thou flower of joy art changed to grief
Thy dew my tears are on thy leaf
Therefore do I behold in vain
Thy beauty look upon it with pain
I see thee with an inward grown
Because I look on the alone

All things my sorrow seem tho share
There broods a sadness on the air
There hangs a gloom along the sky
My boy is dead, and thou shouldst die

Now for the boy which long I had
The sight of thee must make me sad
So in my path no more be seen
But deck this grave Tullmarine[28]

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[28]Melbournensis, op.cit,pp.349-350

In conclusion it is seen that the information on the poets of the Precontact Victorian Aborigines is slight. Nevertheless it is seen that the poets of Victoria were similar to the rest of Australia. In some cases it was shown that the poets of Victoria where unique in that they had a religious experience which gave them the poetic inspiration. Also the Victorian Aboriginal poet could come form a family of poets. Finally the similarities between Victorian poets and certain poets from the Indo European linguistic family indicates that the characteristics of the Victorian poets are part of a larger poetic universe. This could lead into a wide ranging comparative investigation of poets and poetry in other Aboriginal or indigenous cultures.

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CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSIONS

Amidst golden spurwing wattle, blood red hair pin banksia, purple finger flowers, orange immortelle and towering white gums, spread two broad shimmering emerald billobongs. Behind a towering mountain rose another, in the middle stood a vast ,turquoise blue, diaphanous lake, curling around it's edge run sparkling sand, like a large golden serpent. On the right, at the end of a gulf yellow sandbanks floated like billowing clouds, frozen waves sat upon a flat lapis -lazuli sea, imperceptibly rising to rainbow colored sky. Luminous greenery disappeared beneath somber shadowy glads, patches of yellow flashed as scarlet crested parakeets screeched by ,red berries shone like frozen tears, dappled leaves fluttered down from stately ironbarks, water murmured, the last rays of the warm sun gilded the shells of tawny tortoises, a platypus poked a silvery nose between humming reeds to sniff the odoriferous breeze, a mahogony child softly yawned, flashing pearly teeth.

The religion of the Victorian Aborigines was permeated through and through by the Religious / Mystical consciousness. This consciousness manifested an all pervasive and profound mysticism, such that the religion of the Victorian Aborigines can be characterized as mystical. The Religious / Mystical consciousness generated an ontology which penetrated beneath phenomenal reality to discover the hidden meaning, essence, or noumena -the thing-in-itselfe - of the phenomena. This ontology was not so much intellectual, as it was a feeling , an emotional experience of a hidden meaning.

The feelings associated with the Aborigines mystical experience of his world covered a wide spectrum. They ranged from a dread of the numina , to a reverence for some Gods, from an amiable feeling to wards nature ,to a night time errieness. From walks in the bush, the desert, the rainforest, to the camp fire, from a dark recess, to a mountain top, the Aborigines was enveloped in a mystical ambience. The Religious / Mystical consciousness fused the Aborigine to his environment such that the Aborigine was enmeshed into an intricate mosaic of interrelationships and symbiotic reciprocities.

The Religious / Mystical consciousness refracted into a number of distinct and separate

world views. These world views had their own idiosyncratic make up, such that they could be said to constitute separate and unique religious systems. Now though they are unique systems , the connecting thread, which permeates these systems, is a mystical experience; as manifested through and by the Religious / Mystical consciousness.

From the available information it appears that there was at least five, perhaps six, religious systems -forms of the Religious / Mystical consciousness - in Victoria prior to the coming of the Europeans. These religious systems are consonant in the main with the five Aboriginal tribal complexes (nations?), i.e the **Kulin** in central Victoria, the **Kurnai** in Gippsland, the **Barkunjee** of North of the Western district the **Mara** of the South of the Western district the **Wotjobaluk** i.e **Wergia** of the central western district and perhaps the **Yaitmathang** of Omeo.

When an inquiry is made within a nation it is soon apparent that there were local variations within a tribe and differences between tribes. Now though there where regional variations within and between tribes the overall beliefs conformed to a set pattern, such that it could be said that the nation comprised an idiosyncratic or unique system of religious beliefs. These beliefs were so distinct and separate that it is argued that they contributed to their believers considering other Aborigines as wild blackfellows

It should be emphasized that a religious system is an arrangement of elements, such as attitudes, ideas, rituals, beliefs e.t.c. Consequently to understand an element, it must not be divorced from it's context. In other words the system must be understood to understand the element, and the element must be understood in terms of the system. What this means for Aboriginal Victoria is that we must not project our context dependent ideas onto an Aboriginal religious system and we must not view elements from an Aboriginal system in terms of elements from another Aboriginal religious system ; if we do this then a distortion and misunderstanding of the religious system will result.

Now even though the religious systems in Victoria formed distinct and separate groups, there are certain features which cut across the religious systems as unifying factors ,such that it can be said there was a general features that reoccur in all the Aboriginal religious systems. These features are: the dreamtime, the landscape, totemism, numina and supreme beings.

The dreamtime is enshrined in myth. There appears to be no golden age - an age in which the Aborigine whiled away his time in peaceful plenitude . At the beginning of time the

world was structured, given order and meaning. The myth recites a history, it is an account of what the Gods, Demas, or heros did at the beginning of time, the dreamtime. The myths give to the Aborigine a certain perception of reality; they create an ontology.

To tell a dreamtime myth is lay down an apodictic truth, a certainty. The landscape was full of signs as to the truth of the myths, it was full of evidence as to certainty of happenings in the dreamtime. The myths are a sort of map, a map which points out the places which have mystical significances in the countryside. The myths record the doings of the cultural heros. The myth documents the heros travels and notes how they affected or changed certain features of the world.

The dreamtime myths are the fount from which the Religious / Mystical consciousness draws its inspiration, the life force for the mystical ontology. The landscape and night shy was permeated with hidden meaning. The Religious / Mystical consciousness unlocked a new dimension to phenomenal reality and impregnated this reality with experiential and mystical significances. From a rock to a starry pattern, from a ravine to a mountain peak, elements of the night sky and features of the landscape were not just seen as empty objects, but were imbued with a special meaning. The world of the Victorian Aborigine was enfolded in and permeated by a mystical ambience, it was a kind of holy land.

While the myths depicted the structuring of the world ,they olso showed how mankimd was descended from a unitary stock and mystically connected to certain objects of nature - the totem. The awarness of a mystical connection with the world emeshed the Victorian Aborigine in an intricate network of corporate and symbiotic relationships; in a milieu of mystical meaning.

The Aborigine had a mystical understanding of his relationship to and with world . He considered himself either as an individual, or member of a group, either as a gender, or as a category as being intimatly connected - mysticaly - with a totem or totems. The totem stood as a sign for the identity and unity of individuals. The totem indicated the interrelationships which bound an individual, group, gender or category to the world . The Victorian Aborigine looked out at his totemites and his totem and saw an image, or echo of himself. Just like the landscape, the living world offered a multiplicity of mystical significances.

The totem transcended both space and time. The totem was every where and every when. It was not this or that crow, the historical crow, the present crow, the future crow ,the crow there, the crow here, they were all the same crow. The individual was the species.

It is incorrect to associate Victorian Aboriginal religion solely with totemism. The Religious / Mystical consciousness unlocks a wide range of mystical relevances of which totemism is only one element. The mystical understanding of the landscape , the mystical understanding of nature - totemism - and the mystical awareness of a permeating presence - the numina - go together to make Aboriginal religion a rich and varied collage of fused elements and significances.

The numina pervade the Aborigines world. He encounters them were ever he goes. The night seathes with them, dark and foreboding holes are inhabited by them .They scare him, give him illness, play with him, eat him kill him in a myriad of ways. They come in all shapes and sizes, fairy like, malformed, hideous and attractive. The numina occupy his waking life and disturb his sleep. The numina are ever present they pervade his world with their hidden presence. The numina are the product of a Religious / Mystical consciousness which delves into reality to see beneath it, to see it in it's hidden guise. The numina are the product of a mystical perception of reality, an ontology containing hidden dimensions and profound relevances.

The numina play a greater role in the life of the Victorian Aborigine than the supreme beings, the Gods and Demas; because they are more immediate and closer than latter. The numina are more dynamic and pervasive than the Gods and Demas. The gods and Demas though in the minds of the Aborigines are mainly in the background. The Gods and Demas are remote, after performing their creating they left the earth and took up their abode in the sky. Like **Bunjil** of the **Kulin** they retired from the earth to remain among the clouds unconcerned and remote. The Gods and Demas are of little relevance to the Aborigines, because they are so distant and faraway. Though in some cases the Gods evoke a reverence, in the main they are like the Demas, inaccessible and unapproachable. The only recorded account of the immediacy of a God is Parkers account of a **Djadjawurrung** rite directed to what appears to be **Bunjil**. This may indicate that in the main the Gods were only called upon in times of great crisis, when all else hasfailed, there still remained the creator

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The Religious / Mystical consciousness revealed a hidden world to the Victorian Aborigines. It penetrated to the core of existence to unlock it's hidden meaning. The Aborigine did not look out upon the world to see a meaningless array of elements . Because of the Religious / Mystical consciousness the world became transparent. The

Aborigine looked into matter and did not see an opaqueness, he instead saw through it, in to it. The Religious / Mystical consciousness glassified matter, it made it translucent, such that a lurid mysticism shone through.

Now though the above characteristics are common to the Victorian Aborigines, this should not lead to believing that Aboriginal Victoria was homogeneous in it's religious beliefs. Victorian Aboriginal religious systems were, unique , different and distinct; with idiosyncratic characteristics which gave a specific coloring to each system..It appears that the religious systems corresponded to to five sets of tribal complexes or constelllations: the **Kulin** of central Victoria; **Kurnai** of Gippsland; **Barkunjee** ie Murray river tribes from Mildura to Echuca of the North West of Victoria; **Mara** the tribes of South Western Victoria; the **Wergia** of central Western Victoria. We should also mention the possiblity of the **Yaithmatung** of the highlands of Omeo

The main evidence upon which the general characteristics of the **Kulin** is derived is that from the **Woiwurrung** and **Bunwurrung** tribes. It appears from these sources that the **Kulin** believed in a creator God who made the earth, man and animals. This creation account does not correspond to the main dreamtime cosmogonies current in Victoria. The **Kulin** were divided into two primary groups and possessed a form of patrilineal social

totemism and a four element sex totemism; which were both unique to Victoria. Though there was social totemism, there appears to have been no clan or cultic totemism.

It is fairly certain the the **Woiwurrung** , **Bunwurrung** **Wadawurrung** and perhaps the **Braiakaulung** **Kurnai** regarded Wilsons Promontory with special religious sentiments; it was in some degree sacred land. Since the creation accounts do not support the presence of totemism , it could follow that were two superimposed belief systems in central Victoria. Like the rest of Victoria there were regional variations in regard to dreamtime cosmogonies and regional variations in regard to beliefs about the numina. The mythological traditions, the patrilineal totemism and the idiosyncratic numina go to give the **Kulin** a distinctive character and contribute to the uniqueness of their religious system.

The **Kurnai** of Gippsland possessed an entirely different religious system from the **Kulin**. The **Kurnai** only possessed sex totemism and were not divided into any class system. The dreamtime cosmogony was different to the **Kulin** in that for the **Kurnai** the world was both already in existence and possessed inhabitants prior to the creations of their supreme being. The material indicates that there were two cosmological traditions.

One tradition is an account around the activities of a supreme being, the other is different in the sense that the supreme being is replaced be creator inhabitants who were the prototypes of the **Kurnai**. In both cases though the original supernatural inhabitant / inhabitants were not Gods but instead Demas i.e they only restructured an already preexisting world.

Regardless of the characteristics of the original demas the original ancestors of the **Kurnai** were a number of animals. These animals were nevertheless not totems , consequently the **Kurnai** had a smaller range of mystical relationships , or kinship with natural objects than the **Kulin** . The smaller range of mystical relationships engendered by sex totemism, the presence of Demas as distinct from Gods, the dreamtime traditions and the peculiar numina, go to give the **Kurnai** religious system a distinctive and individual set of characteristics which mark it of from the other systems.

Now where central and Eastern Victoria contain different and distinct religious systems, the Western district generally and regionally was a unique system as well. Generally the Aboriginal groups inhabiting the Western district were matrilineal and divided the world up between their class divisions. Now when a regional investigation is carried out it soon becomes apparent that there are unique regional religious systems within this general

framework.

The **Mara** of the south coast of the Western district possessed a moiety system which contained four sections. The **Mara** divided the world up between it's class divisions and possessed matrilineal social totemism. There is not enough information to know what their dreamtime cosmogony was, or whether their supreme beings were Gods or Demas. They possessed an extensive array of numina and omnipotent spirits.Though it cannot be said what the characteristics of the **Mara's** religious system was, if they followed the **Kulin** and **Kurnai** it is quite possible that their system was equally unique. Nevertheless just by having a matrilineal four section system and matrilineal social totemism , this in itself would make the **Mara** unique both in the Western district and Victoria as a whole.

Now where there is little information about the **Mara** the case is slightly different in the case of the extreme North West of the Western district i.e the **Barkunjee** nation. The **Barkunjee** were like the **Kurnai** and the **Kulin** in the sense that there were regional variation about dreamtime cosmogony; nevertheless there is to some degree a general pattern.

The dreamtime was a preexisting world in which the Demas performed their activities.

Apart from the **Watiwati**, who may have believed in a creator God, the other tribes either believed in a preexisting Deams, or a preexisting race. Generally the ancestors of these Aborigines were humans who then transformed themselves into animal - the totems ; this form of transformation does not occur in central and Eastern Victoria. The **Barkunjee** possessed a matrinieal mioety system and matrilineal social totemism, clan totemism and sex totemism. The cosmological traditions together with the forms of totemism go to make the **Barkunjee** a distinctive religious system.

Of all the Aboriginal groups in the Western district the **Wergai** form in the main an anomalous group. Like the **Barkunjee** they had matrilineal totemism, matrilineal clan totemism and sex totemism; they also divided the world up among their class system. Now where the **Wergai** are anomalous is in regard to their cosmogonies. It appears that they adopted beliefs from their **Barkunjee** and**Kulin** neighbors, such that they believed in a God and a Demas; this could be due to local variations, but it is difficult to tell.

From the above it can seen that the Aboriginal religious traditions had a number of similar chacteristics running through. A deep sense of the kinship of man with nature and their shared spiritual existence ; in knowing himself he knows the world, in knowing the world he knows himself; because the world is in him and he is in the world. This led to

the conviction that the Aborigine was not alone in the universe , he was in a corporate and interconected relationship with the world. The collory to this was the belief that the Aborigine could enter into a personal relationship with his totem i.e as friend, protector, helper.e.t.c. The landscape and sky played an important role in the lives of the Aborigines, as they signaled out certain places in the country side, or night sky as being of special importance; authenticating the dreamtime mythology. And finally, though it is not mentioned in the ethnologies, it appears that the religious traditions were not universalistic in nature; they were non proselyting.

These similarities should not delude one into thinking that there was one monolithic Aboriginal religious system in Victoria . There were unique Aboriginal religious systems, not an Aboriginal system. The religious systems in Victoria incorporate the above similarities in ways which are unique to each individual system; such that a similar element will have a different valorization and meaning in a different system. Consequently each system can only be understood in it's own terms.

The above outline of the unique characteristics of the Victorian Aboriginal religious systems is in the main superficial. Apart from a passing mention as to how some Aborigines approached their God, there is no account of the religious life as expressed by the Aborigines themselves and as such the accounts of the early observers are only

cardboard copies of the Aboriginal religion. The perspective of the Religious / Mystical consciousness is an attempt to correct this superficiality and give life and a soul to the religious traditions. The Religious / Mystical consciousness allows as to penetrate the mental and experiential universe of the Aboriginal and perhaps see and feel his world the way he did. Without the idea of the Religious / Mystical consciousness the Aboriginal religion remains opaque. With the perspective of the Religious / Mystical consciousness the Aboriginal religious traditions become clearer and understandable. The Religious / Mystical consciousness unlockes the hidden dimensions of reality, it classifies reality. What is opaque to non religious eyes, becomes transparent to the Religious / Mystical consciousness ; since it makes reality transparent in such away that one sees beneath reality to the thing - in -itself , such that one feels the thing - in - itself.

Whether the Aborigine was viewing the flickering stars, flikering like myriad silvery fireflies upon a velvet sky , gazing into the somber quite of some darkened cave with it's tangled patterns of light and shade, hearing the cry of birds reverberate through the odoriferous vapors of some leafy glade, watching a shimmering landscape hover like some fairy apparition above goldern sands, or contemplating amidst sunbeams scintillating like a million stars upon some diaphanous stream his mahogany hands, all was penetrated by the Religious / Mystical consciousness; such that it was made transparent and it's inner essence shone out in a lurid light to envelope the Aborigine in a mystical ambience.

APPENDIX

SACRED SITES; TOTEM CENTRES; CAVE PAINTINGS; AND POSSUM RUGS

As we saw in discussing the Aboriginal Dreamtime the land in which the Aborigines inhabited was pervaded with numinous import. Certain creeks, mountains, wells, caves, gullies, waterfalls etc where singled out by the Aborigines because these sites where in some regard connected with the Dreamtime and the Dreamtime creatures. As a consequence of being associated with the Dreamtime these sites became sacred for the Aborigines. Certain other site took on a sacred nature a certain times of the year. These sites where the places were the initiations took place. Totem centres, initiation grounds, cave painting sites and other miscellaneous sacred sites dotted the Aboriginal landscape. The landscape was seen through an R/M Consciousness. Beneath certain features of the landscape the Aborigines perceived a deeper levels of meaning. All around where interconnections and interpenetrations. The world of the Aborigines was through and through filled with sacredness. Where the sacred sites of the Australian Aborigines have in some cases been documented. The situation with regard to Victoria is quite disheartening. Though Victoria was one of the early places of settlement the information regarding sacred sites is either recorded in small detail or not at all. Only scattered references for most of the Religious systems of Victoria have been recorded. Nevertheless what has been recorded seems to show the sacred sites of the Victorian Aborigines where of the same nature as for the rest of Aboriginal Australia. This show that while there was great diversity in the religious systems throughout Aboriginal Australia a great degree of commonality or homogeneousness likewise existed

SACRED SITES

What are considered to be very sacred sites through out Aboriginal Australian are the increase sites. These sites were places where the most appropriate sacred initiated men of the tribe performed rites to perpetuate the animal or totem associated with the site. Howitt mentions such a site near Dandenong were the clans men of the **Ngaruk-willam** clan of the **Wurunjerri** tribe deposited leafy boughs to ensure the good catch of the Kangaroo.[1] Howitt's daughter mentioned two rocks near Dandenong said to represent **Djurt-djurt** and **Thara**, the sons of **Bunji**l at which fresh boughs of trees with the leaves

[1] A.W.Howitt, 1904, p.400.

stripped off where placed at the front of the rocks to ensure a plentiful supply of kangaroos.[2] Massola argues that these sites are at Bald Hill close to Wellington at a place now called Clematis[3] (FIGS 7 & 8). Massola argues that sacred sites existed at the **Lal Lal** falls on the Moorabool river where **Bunjil** lived; the cave at Cape Schanck which was made by **Bunjil**; and the already mentioned country of **Loan** near Wilson's Promatory.[4] Similarly Massola notes that there is a Red Rock at Shaving Point which the Kurnai of the area have a myth regarding; and as a conseqeunce Massola regtards it as a sacred rock[5]Metung in Gippsland. Asimilar site is fond a mile north of Mortake in the western district. This site is called Flat-top Hill and has a myth associated with it and was the headquarters of the **Kirrae Wuurong** or Blood-lip tribe[6]; consequently it may have been a sacred site (FIG 6). Parker mentions what appears to be a sacred site of worship to **Mindi** in the land of the **Djadja Wurrung**. Parker states that "[r]ude images, consisting of one large and two small figures, cut in the bark and painted, were set up in a secluded spot; the place was strictly tabooed; the men and afterwards the women, dressed in boughs, and having each a small wand, with a tuft of feathers tied on it, were made to dance in single file, and in a very sinuous course, towards the spot and after going round it several times, to approach the main figure and touch it with the wand."[7] Massola argues that the ceremony was differently an act of worship at a sacred site but was not directed to Mindi but to Bunjil.[8] Massola states that the site of this sacred site might have been on the south-east foot of Mt Franklin or south of the Cairn which is west of Mt Franklin on the east side of the alternative road leading from the Cairn to Daylesford on the south bank of the tributary to Jim Crow Creek; a place known in local tradition as 'the corroboree ground'[9]

Sites which may have had a sacred nature also are the ceremonial sites of initiation. In other areas of Australia these initiation sites are consider to be of a very important

[2] A.Massola, 1961, p.107.
[3] ibid, p.108.
[4] ibid, p.106
[5] ibid, p.106
[6] A.Massola, 1962, p.275.
[7] E.S.Parker 1885, p.25.
[8] A.Massola, 1968B, p.37

import or sacredness. In Victoria there are a number of such sites which are still in existence. These sites are at; **Wurdi Youang** (known as the Mt Rothwell Archaeological Area) north of the **You Yangs** near Geelong (FIG 15 & 16); Lake Bolac sites one (FIG 17) and two in the western district; Carisbrook (FIG 18); Lake Wongan in the western district (FIG 19); and Charlton.[10] Massola notes that there was a stone circle at Dean's Creek near Colac possible called "guanga" which is now destroyed but may have been a ceremonial ground; and thus a sacred site.[11] Sites which were of a particular sacred nature where the totem centres ie the place where the totems resided or came from or went to of the Aborigines. Barwick notes that there were sacred sites at Wilson's Promontory which were controlled by owning clans (identified by the suffix **-wurk**) and the **Jato-wora-woroi** rested at sacred sites around Western Port after creating the **Kulin** and **Kurnai** world.[12] Barwick also points out that there were sacred sites at the Yering area in the land of thw **Woiworung.**[13] At Albury there may have been sacred sites as Barwick notes **Taungurong**, **Waveroo** clans and **Wiradjuri** attended initiations.[14] Simmilary that **Kulin** accompanied by **Waveroo** traveled throughout central and northeastern Victoria to attend male initiation rites.[15] In regard to other possible sacred sites McBryde notes that there were exchange centres and organised meeting areas through out Victoria[16] (see map 8) Howitt notes that there were intiations at Lucknow and Bairnsdale in the land of the **Kurnai**[17] and Krefft points out that there was initiations at Kilkine in the land of the **JariJar**i.[18]

TOTEM CENTRES

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9 ibid, pp.37-38
10 L.Lane and R.L.K.Fullager, 1980 pp.134-151.
11 A.Massola ,1966, p.133-134.
12 D.Barwick, 1984, p.115.
13 ibid, p.122.
14 ibid, p.120
15 ibid, p.120
16 I.McBryde, 1984, p136, 138.
17 Howitt, A.W, 1884, p.302.
18 Krefft, G, 1862-65 p.364

In discussing totemism it was pointed out that **'**Lady Julia Percy Island' five miles of the coast and 12 miles from Port Fairy, south of Lake Yambuk in South-Western Victoria, was a place the souls of the dead went to before being reincarnated (FIG.5). This attribution by the Aborigines of the area indicates that Lady Julia Percy Island was a Totem centre for these Aborigines; a point Massola agrees with[19]. The **Wergai's** trait of placing of the heads of the dead towards their **mi-yur** is similar to the Arunta placing the heads of their dead facing towards the **Tamaru Altjira** of the persons mother.[20] The notion that the souls of the dead goes to a 'land of the dead' is common in Aboriginal Australia with such places as '**Badu'** a collection of islands in the Torres Strait being the land of the dead for the ***jiridja*** moiety of Arnhem Land, and the island of **Bralgu** being the ***dua*** moiety's land of the dead.[21] Totem centres could be 1) places where the souls of the dead returned after death to be reincarnated as in north-eastern Arnhem land[22] or just to live on in a kind of utopia like the unidentifiable island of **Mudilnga** north-east of the Wessels islands in the **Badu** complex[23]; or places where totem spirit-children originated; such as the site of **Gumara** in western Arnhem Land.[24]

Although totem centres are very important for Australian Aborigines the recording of these for the Victorian Aborigines is almost non existent. A. Massola notes that for the Western district of Victoria the only recorded site was that of 'Lady Julia Percy Island.[25] Massola conjectures that the crow totem had a totem site in the Victorian Valley in the Grampians and that the rock shelters, known as the Cultivation Creek shelters, bearing Aboriginal paintings in the Victoria Range of the western Grampians were sacred to the Stump-tail lizard.[26] Like wise Massola conjectures that a totem centre existed at the south-east base of Mt Hamilton[27]. This site was called by the Aborigines **Purra Purra**

[19] A.Massola, 1968, p.132
[20] C. Dean, 1996, p.11
[21] R.C.Berndt & C.H. Berndt, 1988, p.483.
[22] ibid, p.483
[23] ibid, p.483.
[24] ibid, p.152
[25] A.Massola 1968, p.133
[26] ibid, p.132.
[27] ibid, p.132.

(Red Kangaroo) and consists of it being a square rock-hole 12 ft across and 15 ft deep[28] (FIG.4) Massola similarly considers the 'Cave of the Serpent' at Mount Langi Ghiran as being the totem centre of the Black Cockatoo.[29] Massola considers this site to be "...one of the most sacred and ceremonially important ones in Victoria."[30] Perhaps the clearest example of totem centres apart from Lady Julia Percy Island are those relating to the **Wergai**. It was pointed out in the section on totemism that the **Wergai** placed their dead in the direction of the dead persons **mi-yur** or spirit land. Though the places associated with these spirit land are not known they clearly have the attributes of totem centres. A possible clue to were these sites may have been is supplied by Kenyon when he points out that the four known cave painting sites of the Wimmera may have been ceremonial sites and as a consequence sacred or totem sites."[31] Howitt has given a map of certain clansmen's of the **Wergai** totem centres directions[32] (FIG. 10).

CAVE PAINTINGS

As well as the sacred sites of totem centres and initiation grounds in Aboriginal Australia certain cave painting sites also had a sacred nature. The **Wondjina** paintings in the vacinity of the Prince Regent, Sale and Glenelg Rivers of the northern Kimberley's being a case in point.[33] As already mentioned Massola regarded the 'Cave of the Serpent' as being a sacred totemic site (see front cover of this book). Whether the other cave painting sites in Victoria were sacred sites is a matter of conjecture. Kenyon in discussing the four rock painting sites in the Wimmera argues that "..these rock shelters are ceremonial places of the tribe."[34] If Kenyon is right then these site where quite possibly

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[28] ibid, p.132.
[29] A.Massola 1957, p.68.
[30] ibid, p.63
[31] A.S.Kenyon, 1937, p.92.
[32] Howitt, 1904, p.454.
[33] R.C.Berndt & C.H.Berndt, op.cit , p.415
[34] A.S.Kenyon, 1937, p.92.

sacred sites. F. Gladstone came across cave paintings at Mt Pilot which Massola felt where for secret purposes[35] (FIG 9). Massola mentions that there are cave painting in the Victorian high plains but of a very faded nature and thus hard to interpret.[36] A. L. West describes a site at Mt Porcupine near Thologolong station in the upper Murray Valley and notes that it is the fourth of such sites to be reported in NE Victoria. West notes that the style resembles that of the Grampians and in West New South Wales and that the motifs are of hands, human figures and a wallaby or Kangaroo.[37] Nevertheless West does not mention whether this site was of a sacred nature (FIG.20).

POSSUM RUGS

As we saw totemism pervades Aboriginal life and even enters into the marking of individual belongings such as possum rugs. The Victorian Aborigines made possum rugs to keep themselves warm. On some of these rugs they placed certain markings. Of the many thousands of such rugs in Victoria at the time of settlement only a few survive; one in Berlin; one at the Smithsonian Institution Washington America; and one from Lake Condah (see FIG 1) and another from Echuca which are in the National Museum of Victoria.[38] Mountford notes that a number of writers ie Howitt (<u>The Native Tribes Of South-Eastern Australia</u>, 1904, p.742) Parker (<u>The Euahlayi Tribe,</u> London, 1905, p.121); Smyth <u>The Victorian Aborigines</u>, 1878, Melbourne, p.288); Frazer, (‘Aborigines of New South Wales’ <u>Journ. Roy. Soc. N.S.Wales,</u> 1893, Vol.16. p.201) and Greenway (The Kamilarori Tribe’, <u>Science Of Man</u> 1910, Vol.11, No 10, p.198) have either stated or inferred that these marks were the individuals totem marks.[39]”Mountford points out that the signatures of the nine aborigines who signed the document giving Batman ownership of land around Melbourne were totemic marks also (FIG 13); and that the aborigines marked belongings with totemic marks. Mountford quotes Dawson regarding these marks“ the marks of the nine chiefs are the genuine and usual signatures which

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[35] F.Gladstone 1960, p.97.
[36] A.Massola, 1963, p.323.
[37] A.L.West 1976, p.28.
[38] E.C.Mountford, 1957, p.505.
[39] ibid, p.506.

they were in the habit of carving in the barks of trees and their message sticks”.[40] Howitt gives examples of totemic marks on a possum rug of a **Kurnai** aborigine which are called **waribruk;** and Howitt notes that each man has his own **waribruk**[41] (FIG.12). The Aborigine William Barak has drawn paintings of these rugs on Aborigines (FIG.14)[42]. .

[40] ibid, p.506
[41] Howitt.op.cit, p.742.
[42] Aboriginal Australia, 1981-82, p.115.



Purra Purra Water-hole—Mt. Hamilton

FIG 4

(MASSOLA 1968, P. 133)

FIG 5



LADY JULIA PERCY ISLAND AS SEEN FROM THE CRAIG'S SHELL MIDDEN
(MASSOLA 1968, P. 133)



Flat-top Hill, with Rocky Outcrop on Right or North Side.

FIG 6

(MASSOLA 1962, P. 273)

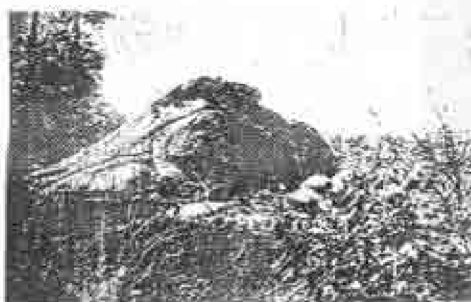


FIG 7

(MASSOLA, [illegible])

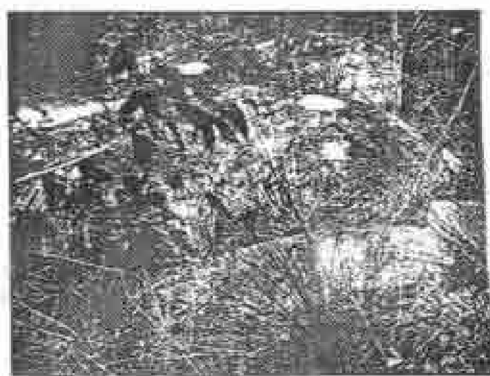


FIG 8

(MASSOLA, 1961, P.[illegible])



FIG 9

(GLADSTONE, 1960, P.56)

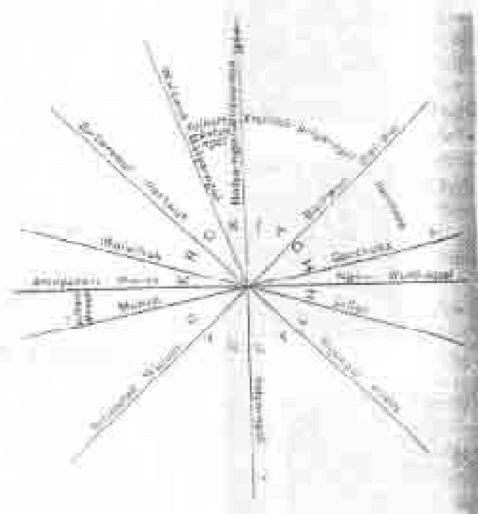


FIG 10

DIRECTION OF TOTEM CENTRES FOR CERTAIN WOTJO CLANSMEN

HOWITT 1904 P.454



The Red Rock [illegible]

[illegible]

FIG 11

MASSOLA 1961 P.107



FIG 12

(HOWITT 1904 P [illegible])



FIG 13

SIGNATURES OR TOTEM MARKS ON BATMAN'S DOCUMENT (MOUNTFORD 19[illegible] P 524)

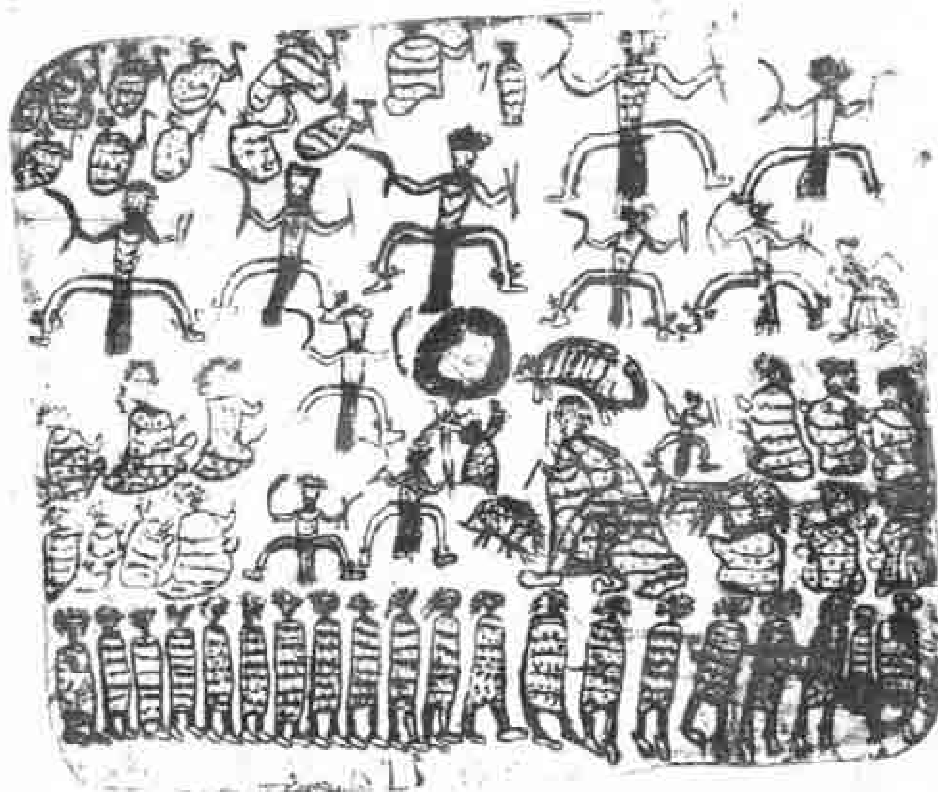
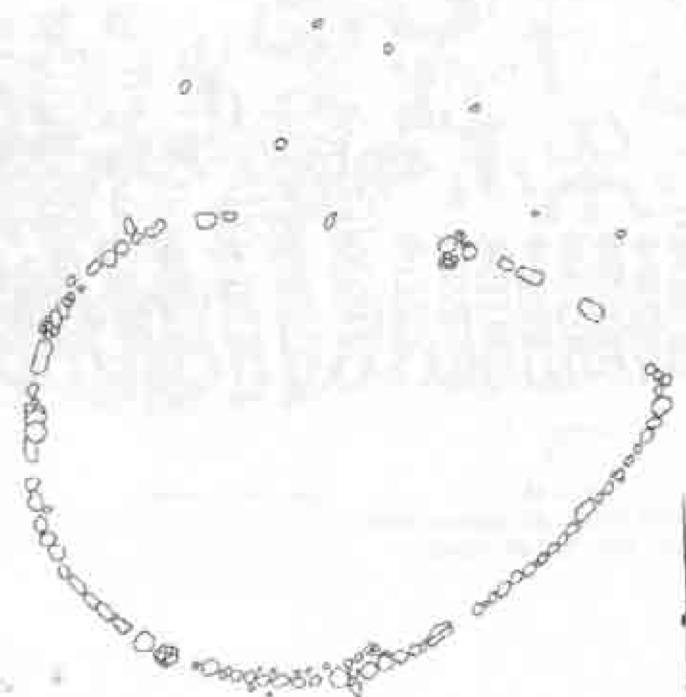


FIG 14
POSSUM RUGS WORN BY ABORIGINES
(ABORIGINAL AUSTRALIA 1981-82)

Painting (Dancing scene)

PLAN OF STONE ALIGNMENT AT WURDI YOUANG



10 5 0 10 20 30 40 m

FIG 15

L. LANE & R.L.K. FULLAGAR, 1980, P.137

WURDI YOUANG SITE



FIG 16
L. LANE & R.L.K. FULLAGAR. 1980 P.138

PLAN OF STONE ALIGNMENT AT THE LAKE BOLAC 1 SITE

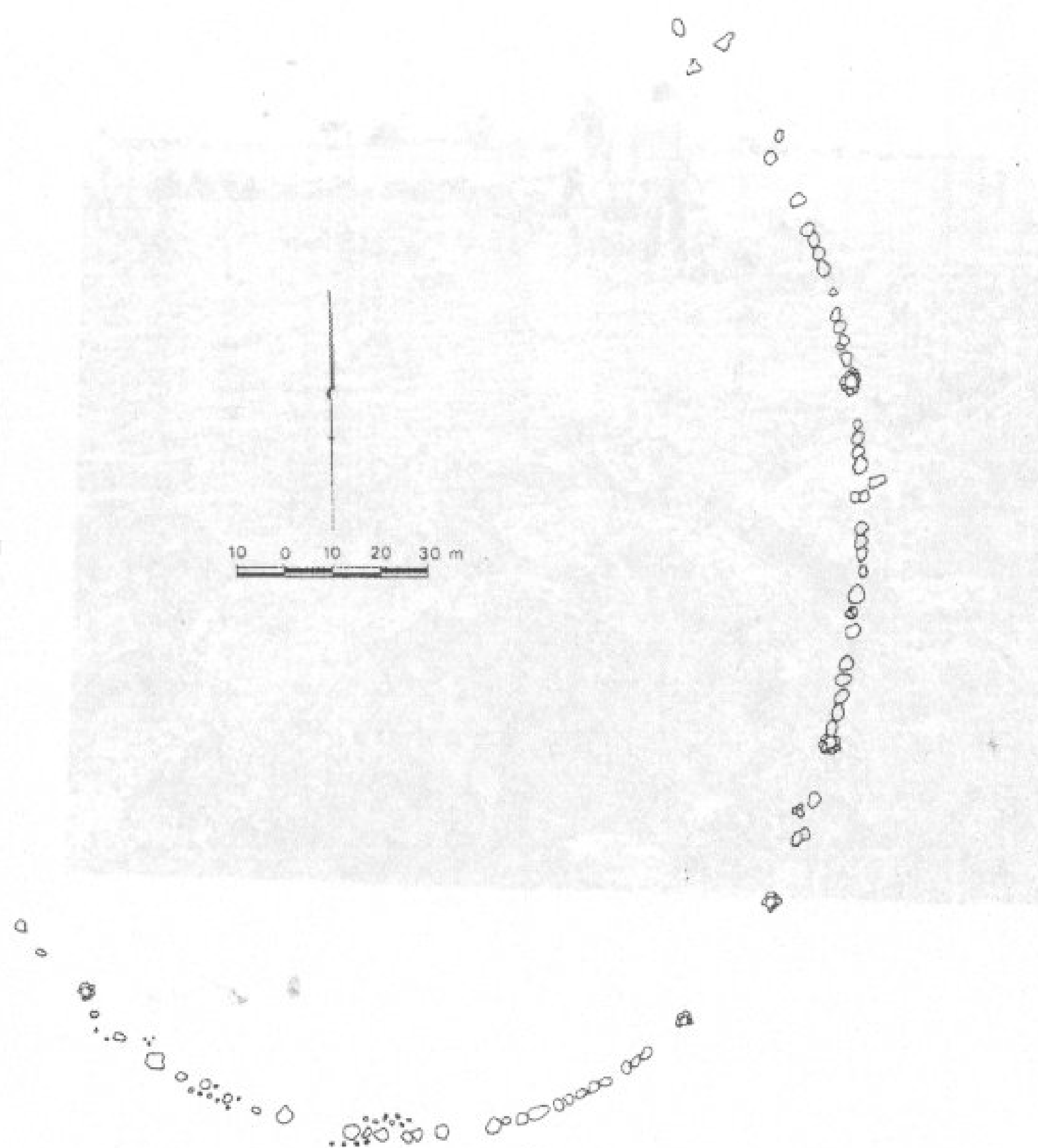


FIG 17
(L. LANE & R.L.K. FULLAGAR, 1980, P.141)

PLAN OF STONE ALIGNMENT AT THE CARISBROOK SITE

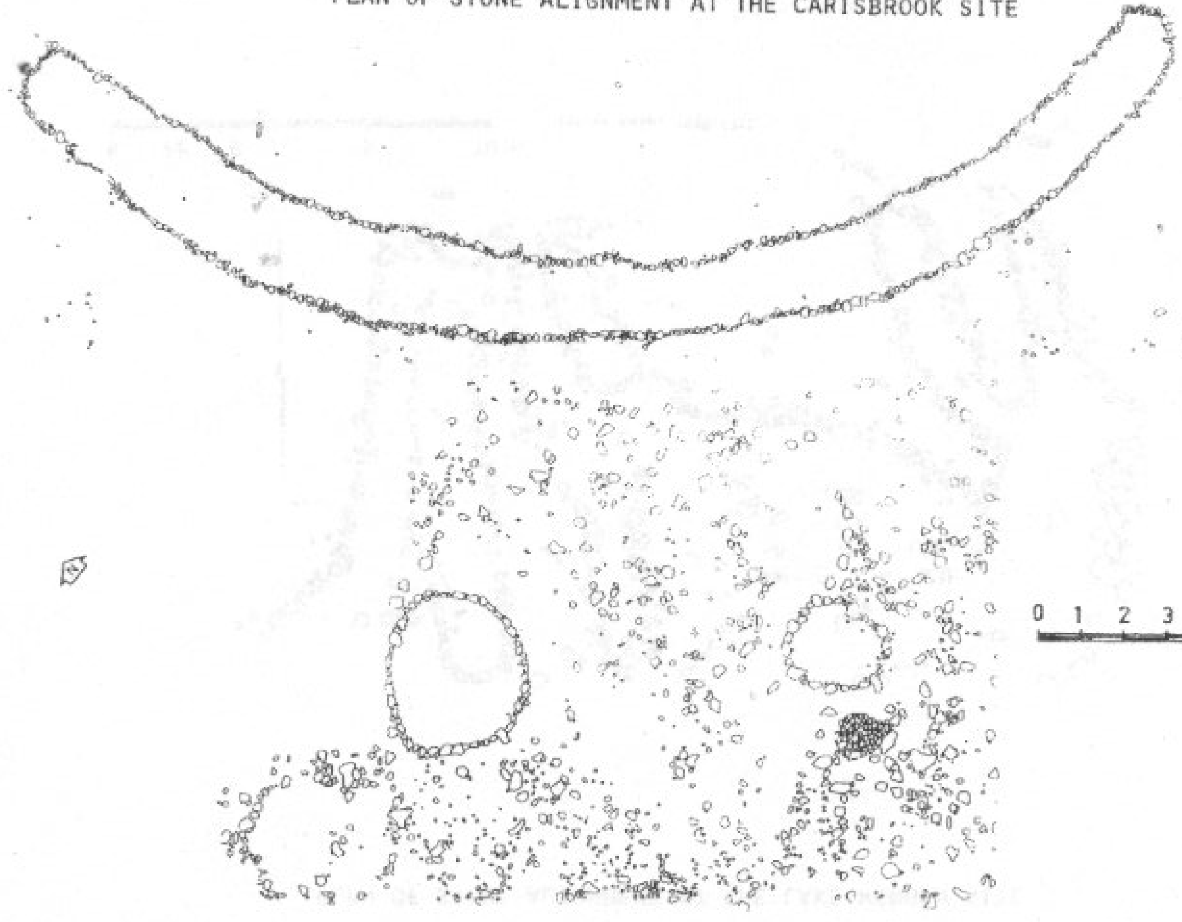




FIG 18
(L. LANE & R.L.K. FULLAGAR 1980 P 144)

PLAN OF STONE ALIGNMENT AT THE LAKE WONGAN SITE

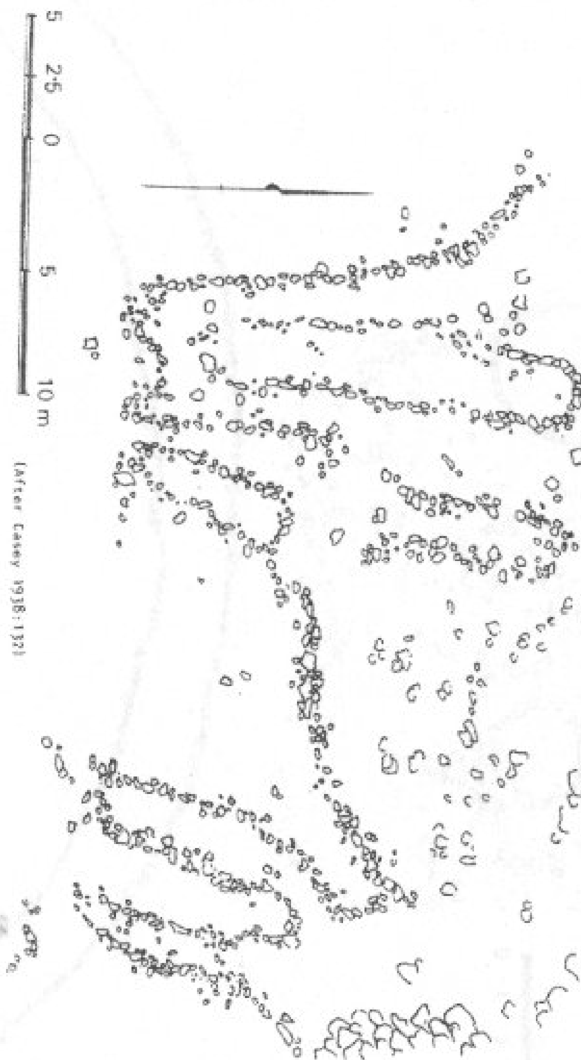


FIG 19
(L. LANE & R.L.K. FULLAGAR. 1980, P.145)

PAINTED ABORIGINAL ROCK SHELTER ON MT. PORCUPINE

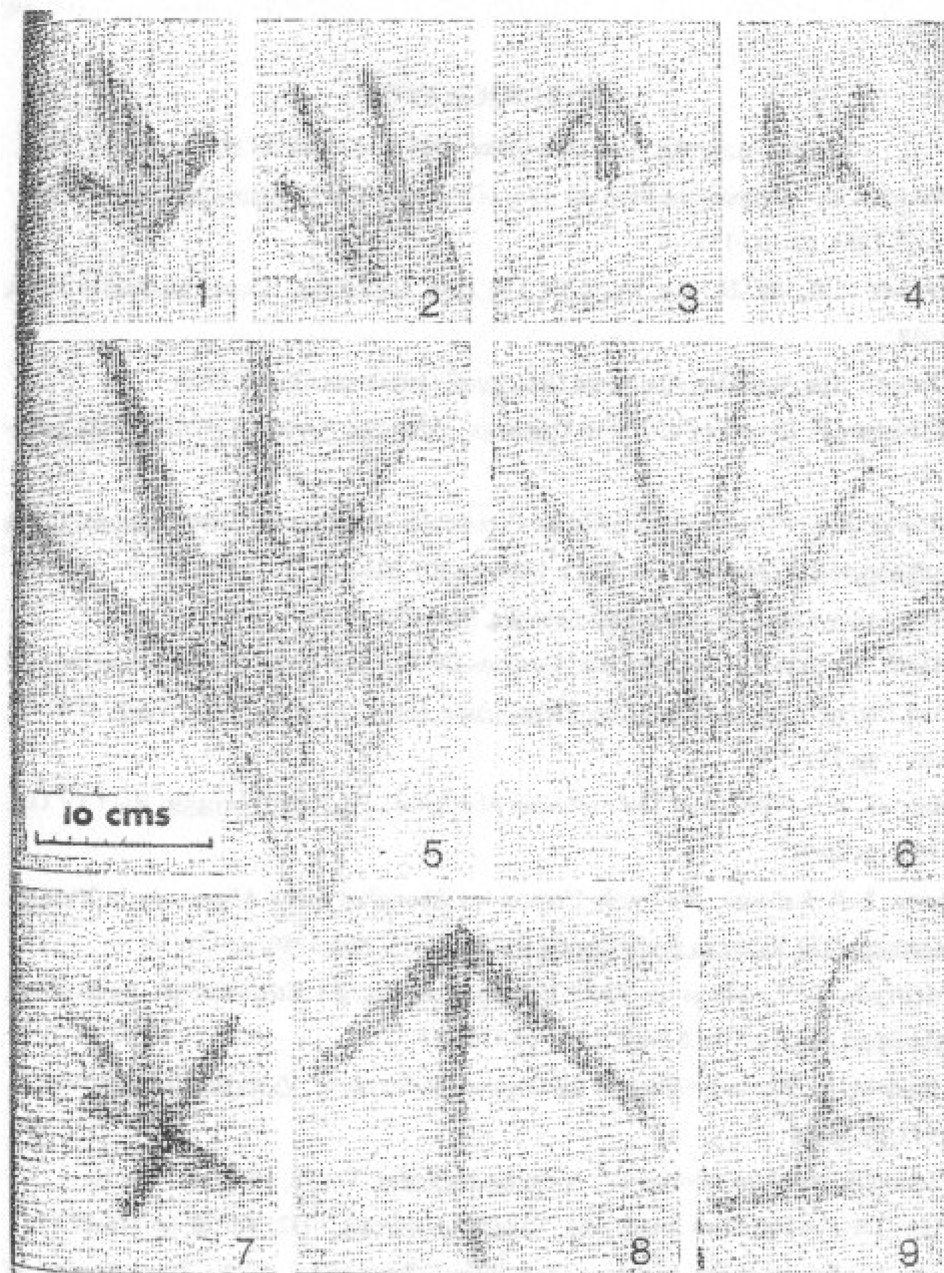


FIG 20
WEST 1976 27

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